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packs
Trekking poles

THE NEW MILLENNIUM:

How has
bushwalking
changed?
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look ahead

GREAT BUSHWALKS:

Wollemi
'mystery peak'
Northern
Wilsons' Prom
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LOST!

Big Victorian
searches
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Summer (January–March) 2000, no 75
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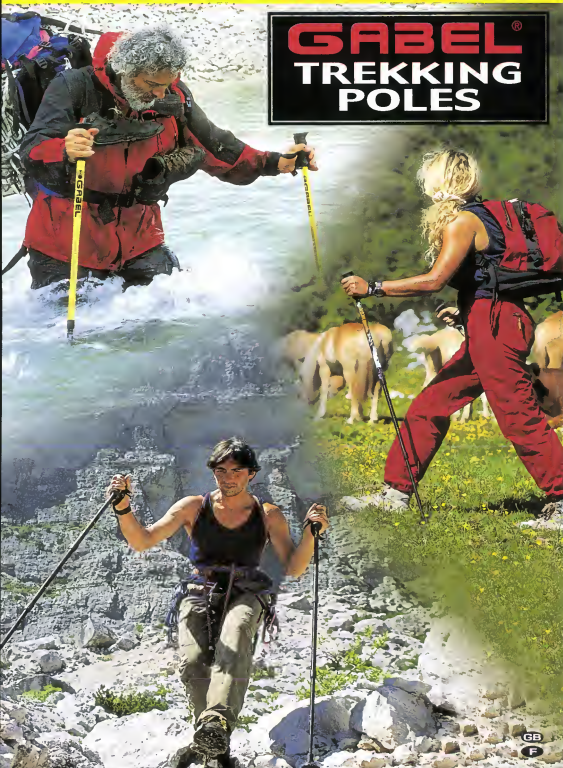
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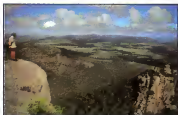
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Where there's a will, there's a way!

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Cover Rob Gray toasts the alpine views from his camp-site on Muellers Peak, Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales. Gray collection

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



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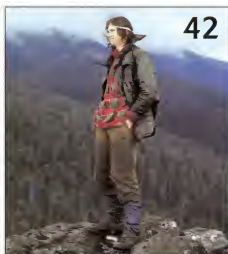
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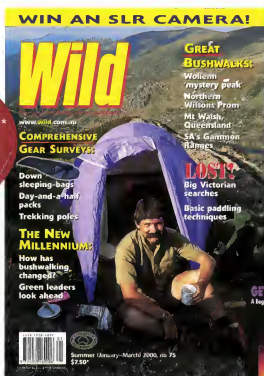


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GREEN dawn?

Does the new millennium herald an era of environmental awareness?

AS I WRITE THIS EDITORIAL, MANY OF US are still reeling from the electoral defeat of the 'unbeatable' Jeff Kennett and his entrenched Liberal Government in Victoria. Of the three Independents who sealed the fate of the government, two had campaigned on environmental issues: Craig Ingram received widespread publicity for his demand that the Snowy River be revitalised. Further, the new Labor Government won a number of marginal seats because of support from environmentalists. (See Green Pages on page 93.) It would be a costly mistake for the new government to overlook its obligations regarding the environmental issues highlighted by those who supported its bid for government.

'It would be a costly mistake for the new government to overlook its obligations regarding the environmental issues'

Ironically, one of the Kennett Government's last environmental efforts was to spare the magnificent and pristine Wongungarra River valley from the loggers' chain-saws. The preservation of the Wongungarra was an issue about which we at Wild felt strongly and for which we actively campaigned. (See the photo essay and appeal for the preservation of the Wongungarra in Wild no 71, as well as Green Pages in this issue.) While the former government is to be congratulated on this decision, many would regard it as too little, too late.

Another recent development which may signal that environmental issues now occupy a bigger place in the hearts and minds of more Australians than ever before is the significant increase in membership of environmental organisations and the surge of donations to these groups over the last few years. (This is also reported in Green Pages.)

While one swallow—or even three—doesn't mean that spring has arrived, these are hopeful signs that the start of the new millennium may see the dawning of a new age of enlightenment. And while most readers—and all informed and unselfish Australians—will wish that this would be so, it is incumbent on every one of us to help make it so. If you ever need any prompting, every issue's Green Pages lists specific, practical suggestions.

A taxing time

In response to questions from subscribers about the GST (see announcement on page 20), readers may find the following useful:

The general information supplied by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) does not apply in the same way to all businesses. Further, some of its information is widely misunderstood.



In our case, our major inputs, including printing, are at present sales-tax exempt. This means that there is little benefit to us in the removal of sales tax. As consumers are obliged to pay all GST—at the rate of 10 per cent—on taxable purchases (including that part of magazine subscriptions to be supplied after 30 June 2000), and we are obliged to collect it and pass it all on to the ATO, we have no choice but to obtain the full 10 per cent from subscribers (and after 30 June 2000—from all readers and advertisers).

As far as Wild subscriptions are concerned, we are applying GST at exactly 10 per cent, only to those issues to be supplied after 30 June 2000. (It is also worth noting that at the same time we are absorbing major cost increases, including the seven per cent rise in the cost of magazine postage recently announced by Australia Post.)

Businesses, including Wild, do not have 'GST tax bills' as such. GST is revenue neutral to us. We simply forward the GST we collect to the ATO, less that part of it we've used to pay any GST on purchases we make. Thus GST credits we receive on purchases do not have any connection whatever with the sale of our products, including subscriptions.

The GST is a significant imposition for us at Wild. We face major costs in collecting, accounting for and administering it; not to mention the cost of explaining it to our readers and advertisers, and the risk of upsetting them. Obviously, we'd prefer not to be in such a position. ☹

Chris Baxter

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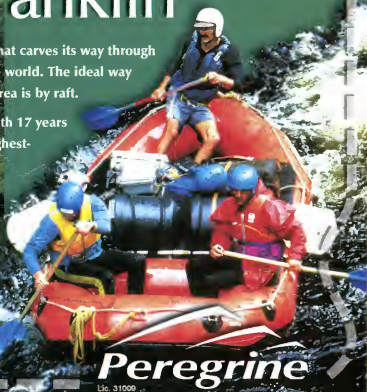
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Warren, you're not fooling me!

Macdonald puts his foot in it

...I WAS DISTURBED TO HEAR FROM A FRIEND who saw Warren Macdonald, a double above-knee amputee, making his ascent of Federation Peak, Tasmania, last March. He had a sizeable team supporting him and some of them were employed to go ahead cutting down trees and shrubs to clear a wide path. This is destruction of our environment for the sake of one man's goal and I find it abhorrent. I will not support a magazine which neglects to research sufficiently to be aware of this or chooses to avoid these facts so it gets the story printed. (See Info, *Wild* no 73.) This is a mockery of *Wild* portraying itself as an environmentally friendly organisation, being a foundation member of the Conservation Alliance; and emphasising that the magazine is printed on partially recycled paper. What's more, this effort appears to be lining someone's pockets with the sales from the book and the articles in *Wild*, and the pay-on-entry talks by Macdonald in Brisbane. Is this another case of the media being bought? Warren, you're not fooling me...

Carolyn Lister
Hamilton Central, Qld

Warren Macdonald replies:

Let me get this right: you have launched a scathing attack on a guy who has lost both his legs, based on 'facts' somebody else told you?

Nobody in my support team was employed by me. The team was made up of close friends, all of whom are committed environmental activists. For you to suggest that they moved ahead of me clearing a path is an insult to both them and myself.

So my effort appears to be lining somebody's pockets? I suppose that after spending the best part of 18 months writing a book I should just give it away! Hell, while I'm at it, I'll do some free slide shows! Then again, maybe I should just stay home watching TV, amassing a small fortune in disability-pension payments.

If you care to take your foot out of your mouth for just a moment, contact the staff at *Wild* for my details and give me a call some time. Directing your accusations to the person concerned—rather than a public forum—before you air your 'facts', could save you considerable embarrassment in the future...

Overjoyed

I have been a subscriber to *Wild* for ten or so years and have thoroughly enjoyed every



issue. You do a wonderful job of balancing the interesting articles with informative snippets—which makes each issue inspiring. My friends usually know when the most recent issue has arrived as I become totally engrossed in the outdoors and talk constantly about our next walking trip, whether I feel it should be the next local weekend or an overseas adventure.

This season is no different, and when I opened the issue (no 74) to see what was in store for my adventurous taste buds, I was overjoyed to see Precipitous Bluff staring back at me! We have recently returned from the South Coast Track, which we extended to include a side trip to Precipitous Bluff. This entailed a lot of wading, and we experienced our share of rain as well. Unfortunately, we didn't make it to the top of PB as the weather was not on our side and the access track up the final ascent resembled a waterfall as opposed to an access

route. PB is now affectionately known as 'that bugger of a mountain'.

I was wondering whether it is possible to get a copy of the picture with Grant Dixon's article. PB is not the best known, and I have not managed to find one picture that does it the credit it deserves; however, the one you featured is sensational. If it is possible to purchase a copy I would really treasure it.

Thanks again for producing such an inspiring product...

Elizabeth Haines
Bells Beach, Vic

Trusting soul sold short on sole

Your ski boot survey (*Wild* no 73) had one significant error. Garmont Libero boots do not weigh 1300 grams a boot. They are 1700 grams a boot—a significant difference.

I recently purchased a pair. The shop said 1600 grams, *Wild* said 1300 grams. On the

To people buying boots at Ajays, Phill Carter is something of a Prince Charming

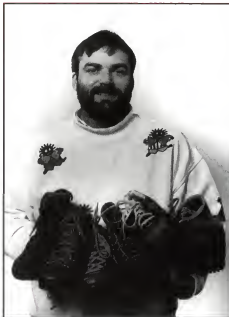
He's always looking for the perfect fit.

Now, you may be no Cinderella but if you prefer bushwalking to ballroom dancing you should head out to Ajays Snow Country Sports.

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With service like this you'd naturally expect Ajays to stay open longer hours — and we do. We're open in summer from 9 am to 6 pm Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 9 pm Friday and 9 am to 2 pm Saturday, and even longer hours for skiers in the winter.

Just now we are clearing out a number of discontinued lines so there are some unbeatable bargains to be snapped up. And we give our "Boot Fit Guarantee" on every boot we sell, including remaindered stock.

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strength of that I thought that 1600 grams had to be the upper limit. Well, the post office scales say 1700 grams. I am decidedly unimpressed. I suppose I should have weighed before buying, but I am a trusting soul.

I know those surveys are hard to assemble but your readers actually use them. So how about getting them right.

Good reading.

Gordon Bedford
gbedford@mira.net

1300 grams is the figure in the Garmon catalogue. The surveyor, Glenn van der Knijff, says that this was also the weight of the boot he weighed, but he points out that a later version of this model, which is now in the shops, has more features and heavier plastic, and weighs 1600 grams. Perhaps your Australia Post figure helps to explain why postage is so expensive! Editor

Ace beat up

What a lovely story on Adrian Cooper (*Wild* no 73).

I remember Adrian well from the 1960s and especially the media beat ups in the 1980s. I was often on the phone late at night attempting to explain to negative journalists that the so-called 'problems' were simply Adrian Cooper encouraging his students to extend their boundaries.

During Adrian's retirement I'm sure that he will be missed by those in the Endeavour Club and by the many students on whom he has had a major and very positive influence...

Best regards.

Dick Smith
Terrey Hills, NSW

The rest is history

I'm just a new subscriber to your very informative magazine and wish to comment on the last point in your Editorial in *Wild* no 73.

I think that you underestimate the importance of the older generation in the pursuit of outdoor activities. Perhaps some articles on some of the earlier pioneering trips would be of interest to all your readers.

Robyn Bodycoat
bodycoat@corplink.com.au

Such articles are published fairly regularly in *Wild*. The latest is in issue 73, on the first ascent of Federation Peak. Editor

Toe jam

...when I read Trix in *Wild* no 73, 'Walking downhill without killing your toes', by Hebe de Souza, I was convinced that there is a much simpler answer—correctly fitted boots with adequate space for your toes.

I wear size-14 boots and, until these sizes became commonplace, I suffered size 13s which did everything that Hebe describes.

Ted Cooper
Powell River, BC
Canada

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrans, Vic 3181.

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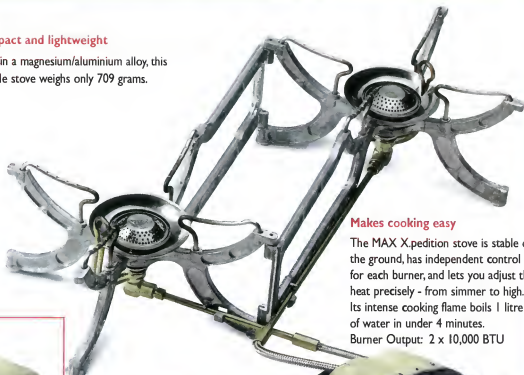


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Russian dominates Oz ski classic

RUSSIAN VITALY TCHERNOV DOMINATED the Kangaroo Hoppet cross-country ski marathon on 28 August, beating Cameron Morton and Canadian John Westdal by more than two minutes. Tchernov was third in last year's event.

Norwegian National Team member Jannike Oeyen won the women's section, beating Brigitte Witschi-Wenger from Switzerland by more than eight minutes. Australian champion Camille Melvey was third.

Held at Falls Creek in north-east Victoria, the Hoppet attracted skiers from 20 nations. The 42 kilometre course had been in good shape until the Wednesday before the event, but a day-and-a-half of steady rain forced organisers to make the usual few changes. Skiers found it tough going on the rain-affected snow after a start that had been delayed by 30 minutes due to poor visibility on the exposed higher sections of the demanding course.

Tchernov, Morton and 1999 Australian Champion Ben Derrick left the front of the main pack in the first few kilometres. Derrick, who had been sick for most of the previous week, dropped off at the foot of the first major climb. At about 12 kilometres Tchernov picked up the pace and broke away from Morton. He quickly established a lead over the next two kilometres. Six different skiers occupied third place at various stages, but in the end Westdal skied a very good tactical race to finish on the podium.

Oeyen was never threatened by other female competitors, and spent most of the race battling with some of the top men. At one stage when the pace was slow in the chasing pack she held fourth place overall. Melvey finished strongly on the second lap, but was unable to catch Witschi-Wenger.

Daniel Van Der Ploeg and Deb Godsmark won the Australian Birkebeiner

Men's and Women's events. Second placings on this shorter course went to Andrew Mock and Kate Spiller; Mark Raymond and Alison McArdle were third.

second; Matthew Smith and Kate Calder, third.

The Hoppet is not just about racing against the clock; for many skiers it is the achievement of completing the course that is the attraction, together with the chance to catch up with friends from around the world. Next year will be the tenth Hoppet, as well as the 21st birthday for the 21 kilometre Australian Birkebeiner. Event organisers hope that past competitors will make a special effort to attend the celebrations.

Allan Marsland



Left, Russian Vitaly Tchernov won the men's event at the 1999 Kangaroo Hoppet cross-country ski marathon at Falls Creek, Victoria, beating Cameron Morton and Canadian John Westdal by more than two minutes. Elle Shaw

Place-getters in the Joey Hoppet Men's and Women's events were Peter Malcolm and Esther Bottomley, first; Kirill Maltsev (Russia) and Melanie Bouveret (France),



Right, Norwegian Jannike Oeyen won the women's section at the Kangaroo Hoppet, beating Brigitte Witschi-Wenger from Switzerland by more than eight minutes. Australian champion Camille Melvey came third. Shaw

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IAN RYAN

Popular outdoor education teacher and enthusiast Ian Ryan, 45, died suddenly on 28 August, having just participated in the Kangaroo Hoppet.

Extremely fit and active, Ian taught at Victoria's Bogong Outdoor Education Centre from 1989, having spent more than a decade before this as a secondary teacher in the Wodonga region.

Ian loved to explore the Bogong High Plains, whether on skis, mountain bike or by foot. He derived great pleasure from sharing his outdoor experiences with family and friends.

Ian excelled in many sporting and recreational pursuits, often displaying his fierce determination, but always with grace and good humour. He embraced the experiences of life, treating problems as new opportunities, and encouraged others to do the same. Those who knew Ian are left with the challenge of making the most of life's opportunities, as he did so well.

He is survived by his wife Julie and children Sean and Leah.

Craig Chapman

Popular outdoor education teacher and enthusiast Ian Ryan, 45, died suddenly in August, having just participated in the Kangaroo Hoppet. He is pictured competing in the 1995 Australian Birkebeiner.

Matthew Bower

World champ to defend title



World rogaining champion Nigel Aylott at a rogaining checkpoint. In January he will defend his world title in New Zealand. According to Aylott, rogaining presents him with his greatest physical and mental endurance challenges.

Peter Ittak

Melbourne rogainer Nigel Aylott, 33, is to defend his world title on the South Island of New Zealand on 15-16 January 2000. In 1998 he won the World Rogaining Championship in Canada with his Finnish teammate, Iiro Kakko.

For the uninitiated, rogaining is the sport of long-distance cross-country navigation, in which teams of two to five people visit as many checkpoints as they wish in a set period of between six and twenty four hours.

While his small stature may not intimidate the competition (he is 168 centimetres tall and weighs about 60 kilograms), his achievements in rogaining, ultraruns (longer than marathons), and mountain running certainly impress.

He has won the Victorian rogaining championships four times, is the current national champion in 100 kilometre road running and 50-mile track running, and is a top competitor in mountain running events.

Aylott says that he is motivated by the challenge of finding out what he can do.

He believes that his running strength and endurance and the ability to concentrate for 24 hours at a time make him good at rogaining events, in which he has competed since 1985. The sport presents him with his greatest physical and mental endurance challenges.

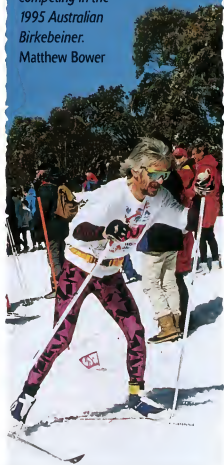
Navigation is the most critical element for rogainers, according to Aylott. He offers them the following advice: the best strategy is to maintain an even pace although you may want to go faster during daylight. At night concentrate on navigating well rather than using a bright torch to search for checkpoints, and keep in mind alternative route options for the last two hours of the event. Get plenty of rest before and after a rogain. In the week that follows, it's good to exercise gently (walking, cycling).

He suggests that rogaining appeals more to bushwalkers than does orienteering: rogainers use a standard map rather than a specialised one, and they don't have to be competitive.

Although a world champion, he has received little financial support and not any prize money from rogaining. In fact, he has to juggle his training (one to two hours of running, cycling or aerobics a day) and competing with a full-time job at Telstra. He says that he is basically rewarded personally for his efforts in rogaining, which is 'a more social sport concentrating on participation'.

When asked what he disliked about rogaining, he replied: 'Having to clean the shoes and gaiters afterwards!'

Naomi Peters



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Into the deep

Peter Ackroyd reports that Melbourne cavers discovered several significant caves on New Zealand's South Island in January. The caves are on the north-west flank of Mt Owen in Kahurangi National Park. One of them, Viceroy Shaft, is 415 metres deep and a kilometre long. Its end has not yet been sighted, but the cave already qualifies as one of the ten deepest in New Zealand. In fact, it was getting bigger (and much wetter) the deeper the cavers went. Other caves found and explored were typically potholes with depths of 90 metres, 60 metres (VicTom Pot), and several around the 20 metre mark.

Eric Lenser about to descend a 90 metre deep pothole, one of several caves found by Melbourne cavers at Mt Owen on New Zealand's South Island in January. A vertical shaft system, it has a waterfall choked in rubble, and narrow rifts. Peter Ackroyd



SCROGGING

■ Cross-country skiers will be the only losers when a proposed **trail fee system** is introduced in 2000 for the use of the XC trails at **Perisher Valley**, New South Wales, according to the Kosciuszko Cross Country Skiers. The group is concerned that XC skiers will have to pay to use the trails when, it claims, the franchise agreement between the State Government and Murray Publishing covering the Perisher Valley skiing area states that the lessee can be directed to conduct grooming services at no cost to the public in return for lucrative exclusivity rights.



Competitors before the start of the final Paddy Pallin Cross Country Ski Classic at Perisher Valley, NSW, in August. The winners of the Men's and Women's Open events were Nick Almoukov and Alina McMaster. Victor Zubakin

■ The final **Paddy Pallin Cross Country Ski Classic** (25 kilometres) was held at **Perisher Valley**, NSW, on 14 August. In the Men's Open Nick Almoukov finished ahead of Anthony Evans, second, and Tom Landon-Smith, third. Alina McMaster won the Women's Open, beating Jenny Altermatt, second, and Carla Zijlstra, third. The 12 kilometre **Rex Cox Cross Country Ski Classic** was held on the same day. The Men's Open had a tight finish: Matt Murtagh beat Matt O'Rourke by just three seconds to win the event. David Colledge came in third. In the Women's Open Kate Calder was first, Sally Cunningham, second, and Leisl Redmond, third.

■ Adventurer and explorer **Peter Treseder** and environmental scientist **Tim Jarvis** began a **trans-Antarctic trek** on 17 October. They are the first to attempt a complete traverse of Antarctica—where temperatures frequently drop below -40°C—without aid from machines, dogs, sails or food dumps.

■ Ken De-mott tells us that a new **foot-bridge** has been constructed on the **Mersey River**, Tasmania, south of Lake Rowland, and that the walking track that leads to it passes through private land. He adds that walkers should feel free 'to pop in and have a cup of tea' if he's at home in the Pine Huts near the west end of the bridge.

■ Adventurer **Huw Kingston** recently travelled from **Brisbane** to **Darwin** by mountain bike, sea kayak, foot and canoe. The 6000 kilometre trip took 105 days, ending on 8 October. It was the third leg of his City2City project, in which he hopes to link the State capitals by making similar self-propelled journeys.



Adventurer Huw Kingston nears the top of Mt Bartle Frere (1622 metres), the highest point in Queensland, on his recent 6000 kilometre journey from Brisbane to Darwin by mountain bike, sea kayak, foot and canoe. Kingston collection

Highlights included paddling alongside Hinchinbrook Island and beyond, walking down from Mt Dalrymple into St Helens Creek, standing on the summit of Mt Bartle Frere, and walking in Kakadu and with two Aborigines. He also had to learn the habits of crocodiles in rivers! 🐊

Corrections and amplifications

In a caption on page 15 of *Wild* no 74, we said that Douglas Mawson was the first Australian to reach the South Magnetic Pole in 1908; in fact, he did this in 1909.

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack sports, events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

December	
27-30 RC Murray Marathon C	Vic (03) 9685 9839
January	
22-23 Upside-down 12-hr R	WA (08) 9381 8608
February	
19 Upside-down 12-hr R	Qld (07) 3369 1641
Metro/Cyclo-gaine 6-hr R	Vic (03) 9718 2753
26 Metrogaine 6-hr R (Darwin)	NT (08) 8948 1187
27 SCM Harbour Challenge C	NSW (02) 9219 2040
March	
4-6 Cradle to Coast M	Tas (03) 6244 5222
5 Metrogaine 6-hr R (Hornbush)	NSW (02) 9990 3480
18 6/12-hr R	Vic (03) 9718 2753
Metrogaine 6-hr R	SA (08) 8271 2712
6-hr R	WA (08) 9381 8608
18-19 ACT Champs 24-hr R	ACT (02) 6295 6019
April	
1-2 Training weekend R	Qld (07) 3369 1641
15 12-hr R	WA (08) 9381 8608
15-16 Rowing 15/24-hr R (Seven Creeks repeat)	Vic (03) 9718 2753
NSW Champs 12/24-hr R (Cala)	NSW (02) 9990 3480

Activities: B bushwalking, C canoeing, M multisports, R roving, RC rockclimbing, S skiing. Organisations: RC Red Cross, SCM Sydney City Mission. Roving events are organised by the State roving associations.

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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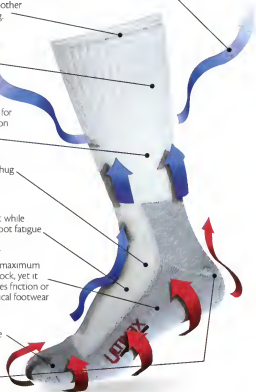
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A home among the gum-trees

Quentin Chester introduces us to his friends—oddballs with mottled skin and characters who sway and hum

LET'S GO FOR A WALK. A LITTLE TODDLE down that gully there. Won't take long. There are just a few things I'd like to show you. Trees mainly.

Sorry about all the fences. Somebody got carried away. There are so many gates we decided to give them names. The creek runs through here, so this one's Water Gate. Watch your step, it's pretty slippery. That little one way down the bottom of this gully is Flood Gates. And the one all alone on the hill—his name's Bill. [*Groan*. Editor]

Sheep have chewed this paddock bare but at least this old stringybark over here has survived. Must be 80 years old or more. Could tell a few stories I reckon. You can see where it's lost some big boughs. This one's not a bad place to park your bum and watch the sunset.

Let's get into the scrub: follow this spur between the two gullies. Pretty good set of weeds, eh! We've got everything here. All the Bs—blackberries, broom, bracken, briar-rose and boneseed. Plus hawthorn and holly. Not to mention masses of gorse and erica. You name it, we've got it. Should get a grant to preserve this lot. Make it a listed attraction. The brass plaque could say: 'Here in a few hundred square metres is perhaps the finest example of how to bugger up the local flora.'

Actually, we're having a crack at getting rid of the stuff. A bit of botanic cleansing. Play God. Slash and burn. Bung in a few natives. She'll be right.

Nothing's that simple, of course. The other day I was hacking away at some gorse and this beaut, little nest cup with three speckled eggs fell at my feet. I'd just destroyed a singing honey-eater's offspring.

A lot of tiny birds hide out in the tall weeds. In the dense patch on the slope

over there you'll find red-browed finches nesting plus a few spotted pardalotes, New Holland honey-eaters, white-browed scrub wrens and yellow-rumped thornbills. That prickly confusion is a safe haven for a bunch of birds which used to hang out in a shrubby understorey that's been cleared for cows and houses. So we'll save ourselves some blood and sweat and keep a few weed plots for the birds.

Oh yeah, the lights up there on the hill. That's our place. Been here since Easter. The house is a '70s time warp, but it'll do. OK, I know I said that I'd never live back here in the hills, what with the bushfires and all. But the 'burbs were starting to grind me down. Couldn't hack the neighbours so close, sirens at 2 am, stubbies lobbed over the fence, hoons cracking wheelies outside the bedroom window.

So we started snooping around for a place with a bit of room and ended up here. I know it's not exactly the Tarkine but to us it feels like paradise. The only neighbours we can hear have feathers. The street gets about five cars a day if you're unlucky. And on a clear morning I can be in the kitchen up to my elbows in suds and stare 20 kilometres across treetops and not much else.

Speaking of fires, the weird thing is that there hadn't been a bushfire in this valley since 1959. Then just a few weeks after we moved I got a call saying that there was smoke over the hills—our hills. By the time I got home the spouse had the gutters brimming and our fire pump rearing to go. Luckily, the worst was over and the main excitement was watching water-bombing planes buzzing low over our roof. Still, I didn't sleep too well that night, especially in the wee smalls when the wind picked up.

So why this place? Well the trees got to me. I know we had those whopping Norfolk Island pines lined up around us by the beach. All very impressive and I used to like watching winter squalls ripping through and the maggies perched on top swaying back and forward. Trouble was the pines had just been plonked there to pretty up the streets. They didn't belong.

What we're looking at in this gully is what's always been here. South Aussie bluegums and lots of messmate stringybarks. And it sure is a mess, mate; a muddle of crooked limbs and fallen branches. Piles of leaves. Sticks you're forever tripping over. So untidy, in fact, that it looks perfectly natural.

Even though there are heaps of reasons not to live on a ridge such as this, here we are. I s'pose it comes down to the fact that this feels like the kind of place I've spent the last 20 years trying to escape to. A place where eucalypts rule.

Bushwalking bods come to know lots of things, especially about trees. How they

*If you go down to the woods today
you're in for a big surprise.*

Greg Tassel



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Photo - P. Monks

Arnhem Land **Success!**

**Jawoyn Explorer:
14 May – 3 June**

The Jawoyn Association, which represents the traditional owners of the region near Katherine, has given us permission to repeat our 1999 trip to the headwaters of the Katherine River in the south-east corner of Kakadu and the south-west corner of Arnhem Land. Both areas are normally out of bounds to bushwalkers.

We will be accompanied by an Aboriginal guide and/or member of the Jawoyn Association staff. We will have a helicopter food drop at the halfway point.

We cannot be sure we will be allowed to run this trip again.

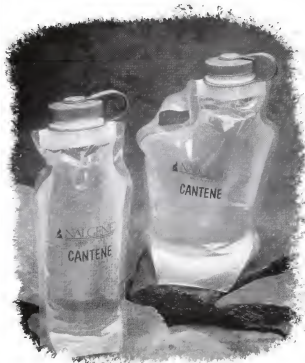
It took us more than ten years to get permission for the first trip. That trip was a resounding success, but the traditional owners have stressed that we cannot take continued access for granted. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Where else can you spend three weeks walking through the bush with an Aboriginal guide? If you want to find out more, please ask for the trip notes.

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bend and roar in a gully wind. Or that soft, leafy chatter you get with a light northerly. The way bark shreds and peels. How trunks turn as glossy as a racehorse in the wet. The lime and mulberry tinge of new growth. Trees that give shade. The ones to tuck behind in a squall. Good wood for campfires. Trees that signpost water. The widow makers. Saplings you can use for abseiling. That sort of thing.

I was thinking about this the other day during a breather from hacking at some blackberries. This might sound soppy, but even when I'm down here by myself I never feel alone. It seems to me that with trees you're in company. They are something you can warm to—and not just in a fire. A trunk to hug if you're into that sort of thing.

Take this little nook, for example. What we have here are not neat 'specimens'. Instead we have a shaggy, scrappy grab bag of a forest. This tall timber isn't just a roof over our heads—it animates the place. There are limbs and crowns. Characters who sway and hum. Oddballs with mottled skin. Progeny making their way in the world. Burly types who endure the seasons. Old-timers stumbling to the ground to rot.

Often trees are the crux of a place. What would it be like to ski in the High Country if there weren't any snow gums? How would we regard the Macdonnell Ranges without the pale, milky appendages of ghost gums? Or an escarpment creek in Arnhem Land minus the shade of anbinik trees? Rip all the boabs off a Kimberley ridge or the angophoras from Sydney's sandstone bush and see what's left. Rocks and blinding sky, that's what.

Of course, this country's got its famous forests in the south-west and south-east. Big-time stands of karri, jarrah and mountain ash. All very majestic. And yes, it's bloody shameful the way they're still being logged. But that's not what I'm on about here. Nor am I trying to flog rainforests. Yeah, yeah, I know they're absolutely fabulous. But they steal the limelight—jeez, they steal all the bloody light. Too dark and crowded. Can't see where one tree begins and another ends.

No, what I'm trying to say is that even a scratchy, anonymous stretch of scrub such as this has a lot going for it. And not just the trees. There are also the tenants. Chortling eastern rosellas and red-necked honeyeaters (my alarm clocks). Rainbow lorikeets gabbling away. Several noisy magpie families. And late in the day, we're visited by a flock of yellow-tailed black cockatoos. Ancient birds lumbering by.

Enough raving; we'd better move on. I've grubbed out a little path through here back towards the main creek. Nice bits of white quartz on the ground. This sheltered bower is my favourite place in the early evening. On a cold night a month or so back I was down here watching the last light breaking through the branches when a bunch of kookaburras burst into a mad cackle. Not just one or two but nine of the noisy individuals lined up on a horizontal branch as

though old diggers in the front bar. Slicked-back heads tilted skyward. Dagger beaks doing their staccato gargle. A vintage Movie-tone newsreel come to life.

Each day it's something different. When we first looked at the place with Ron, the land agent, a koala waddled across the lawn and climbed the tree just by the balcony. The other morning I looked up to see three magpies chasing a ring-tailed possum along the black bundle of cables suspended under the powerlines. It's getting to the stage where it feels as though I need David Attenborough to commentate every time I stumble out to get the newspaper. Just last Saturday I walked down the driveway and was met by a one-and-a-half metre tall western grey kangaroo bounding down the street, bold as you please. Yes, it all happens here in bush suburbia.

These trees around us—our new address—form another branch outlet in the backwoods that are my life. I grew up not far from here on another timbered spur. From my bed I looked out the window up to an old *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (aka river red gum). This giant was my barometer of the world outside. By the light on the leaves or the twist of a branch in the wind I could judge the day. If I was home crook from school I would happily lie there all afternoon gazing into the restless mass of leaves and blossom.

**'This feels like
the kind of place
where eucalypts
rule.'**

Like most kids I was a tree climber. Gums are a challenge. All smooth trunks and up-turned branches. You have to improvise with ropes. Or nail blocks to the trunk to step on. Always enjoyed being perched up high watching people below. It was spying, I guess. Did quite a bit of this a few years ago when we lived on an island near Sydney. A big flood lifted the water table and, sadly, killed a lot of introduced eucalypts. Couldn't survive having their feet wet for weeks on end. I spent months, on and off, high in the dead crowns of these gums, amputating limbs with a bush saw. Hard yakka but it gave me a birdlike view of nearby backyards. It's surprising what people do when they don't know they're being watched.

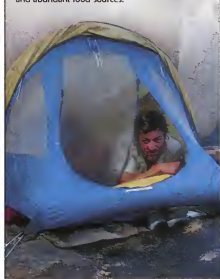
I still fell the occasional branch. But more often these days I make it my business to walk among trees. Been doing it for ten years. I write about them. Perch in their shade. Cook on their coals. All sorts of trees. Rock figs. Desert oaks. Woollybutts. Banksias. Cypress trees. Satinays. Tea-trees. Sugar gums. For me, too many trees are barely enough. And my livelihood is inkly

words on wood pulp. Not a paper-bark novelist as such. More your scribbly gum.

And when not scribbling I help my middle brother to deliver aromatic oak barrels to wine makers. A business started by my paternal grandfather. A stern, old codger who also used to deal in ash, beech and hickory. Wood for axe-handles, tennis racquets and the like. My Mum's family were master joiners. Tall, beaky blokes of Prussian descent. They built kitchens and doors out of meranti, cedar and Oregon. So, you see, my family roots are in trees. I've got sawdust in the blood.

Quentin Chester

(see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) lives to walk and writes to live. His much preferred habitat is a deep Flinders Ranges gorge where he can be found resting on sandstone close to cool, dark waterholes and abundant food sources.



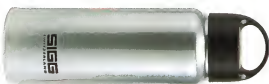
The light's going. We'd better get back. It's pretty steep getting up here. Amazing how these stringybarks can hang on. Oh yeah, there's something else to show you. Check this guy out. A strapping, young Tassie blue-gum. Already a good 30 metres tall. Not exactly a local here, I know. Still, a nifty reminder of other times and places. Tassie forests, naturally enough. But also the homesickness I always felt when lobbying into New Delhi after a month's trekking in high Kashmir or Nepal and seeing hundreds of these trees—*Eucalyptus globulus*—lining the city's circling streets. I get the same feeling in San Francisco when I take time out in Tilden, a little park just across San Francisco Bay, behind Berkeley. You can turn your back on Californian excess. Wander into groves of big eucalypts and inhale bluegum vapours.

That's the thing about growing up with trees. Once they grab you by the senses they never let go. Still, it's getting a bit brisk out here now. Time to get inside and watch some embers. You can meet the spouse. The one who smiles and calls me a sap. ☺

Quentin Chester

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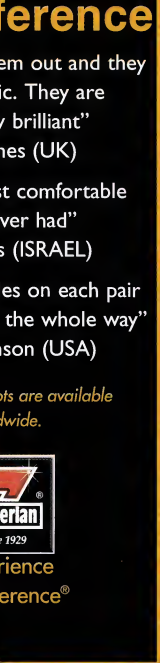
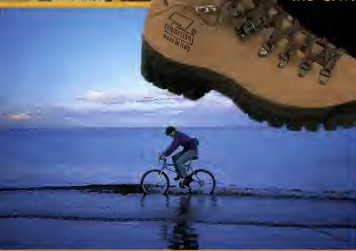
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How to paddle white water

David Clark introduces some basic techniques. Drawings by Michael Hampton

I never dreamed that any mere physical experience could be so stimulating...Now that I've had a taste for it I don't wonder you love boating.

Katherine Hepburn after running white-water rapids in the *African Queen*, 1951

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT A WOODEN STEAM-boat would last long on Australia's white-water rivers—even if the levels were up! Today you are more likely to experience Hepburn's aquatic euphoria in a canoe or kayak.

Learning the basics

Many canoeists find it blissful to glide quietly across the water, the bow first slicing then distorting the landscape reflected on the surface, the sounds of the bush disturbed only by the rhythmic plunk of the paddle. Although white-water kayakers may find the flat water before or after the rapids tedious, the truth is

that even the most gung-ho kayaker in Christendom has to learn to paddle on calmer waters.

To try to cover all the basic kayaking strokes in a short magazine article would inevitably result in sodden students and dry reading. The best way to learn the rudiments is on a basic skills course. Over one or two days you will

River right

Strainer

Drop

Hole or hydraulic

Pool

River left

learn how to paddle forwards (in a straight line) and how to manoeuvre the kayak using sweep strokes, side draws and bow draws. Support strokes and capsiz drill are covered as well. (These strokes are defined in the glossary.)

Courses cost \$80 or more a day and are run by State canoe associations (see Outdoor Skills, Wild no 74) and commercial operators. Learning good techniques early from qualified instructors will make the transition to white water easier.

Some canoe clubs run beginners' trips on which you can develop the skills learned on a course. Clubs also provide contact with other paddlers—potential companions on

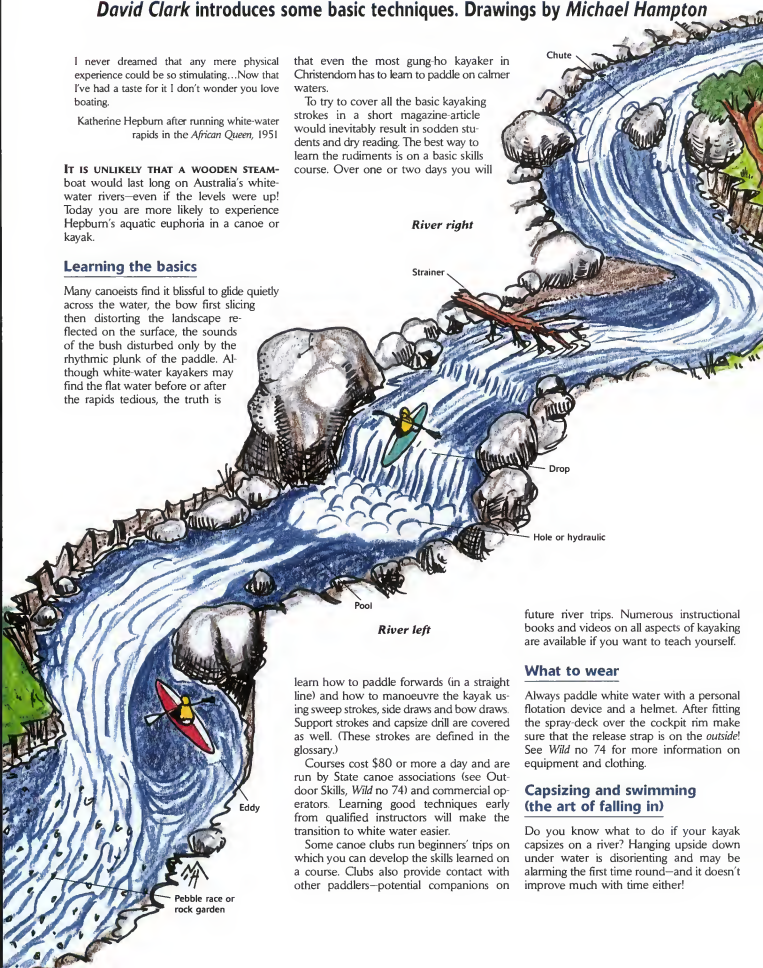
future river trips. Numerous instructional books and videos on all aspects of kayaking are available if you want to teach yourself.

What to wear

Always paddle white water with a personal flotation device and a helmet. After fitting the spray-deck over the cockpit rim make sure that the release strap is on the *outside*! See Wild no 74 for more information on equipment and clothing.

Capsizing and swimming (the art of falling in)

Do you know what to do if your kayak capsizes on a river? Hanging upside down under water is disorienting and may be alarming the first time round—and it doesn't improve much with time either!



If you tip over on a rapid, lean forward in your kayak. This makes it easier to get out and stops your chin from rearranging rocks in the river. Wait until you are completely upside down, then grab hold of the spray-deck release strap and pull it firmly. Place your hands on the kayak deck beside your hips. Push down to lift your buttocks off the seat, then shove the kayak forwards and away from you (or do a forward roll). Swim to the surface and resume breathing.

Stay on the upstream side of the kayak and hold the end loop of the boat as well as your paddle in one hand. Float on your back with your feet up and pointing downstream. The kayak will provide good floata-

modern white-water kayaks, which have sharp edges (rails) and flat decks to give greater manoeuvrability and control.

Rule 1: lean downstream (Figure 1)

When side-on to a current, lift the upstream edge of the kayak out of the water by raising the knee on that side (*lean downstream*). If you don't, the water is likely to catch your upstream edge and flip you over for a quick conversation with the fish.

Rule 2: edge into turns

Edge the kayak into turns—as you would on a bike—by raising the knee on the outside of the turn. If you don't, the back deck of

stronger the current, the narrower the angle required. Lean downstream and into the turn (Rules 1 and 2) and perform a low brace or bow draw (see glossary). The current pushes on the bow of the kayak and, combined with your turning stroke, the boat spins to face downstream.

Breaking out (Figure 3)

The following explains how you can move from the main current into an eddy.

Paddle downstream and aim towards the top of the eddy you want to enter. Boat lean, speed and angle of approach vary depending on the volume of water and size of the eddy. You will learn by experience, that is, by running a rapid backwards after missing the last eddy!

A gentle turning curve is usually best as this maintains good speed when crossing the eddy line. As the boat starts to cross the eddy line, lean into the turn (Rule 2), put in a big forward sweep (see glossary) on the downstream side and use a low brace or bow draw to complete the break out.

Ferry gliding (Figure 4)

This technique is used to cross from one side of the river to the other without travelling up- or downstream.



Figure 1: Lean downstream

My river trip

After driving for hours and repeatedly consulting the guidebook, we found the put-in by accident. With reasonable care we unloaded the boats—only lost one wing mirror this time.

I changed into thermals still damp from the trip the day before—I must remember to wash them. All the dry clothes were dumped into John's car, then he and Alison set off to do the car shuttle. Out came the hacky sack. An hour or so later Alison's car reappeared. We ran through who would carry the first aid kits, throw ropes, spare clothes and, most importantly, the jelly snakes.

The river was at a good level—I'd checked it on the Internet that morning. Walter had run the river a few weeks before and warned us about a recently fallen tree blocking one of the rapids. John hadn't paddled this grade, so we arranged to keep a close eye on him—particularly as he was carrying the car keys!

We left plenty of time in case we had any swimmers. After quickly running through some river signals we were off. The rapids came thick and fast with plenty of places to play. We portaged the blocked rapid and lunched on a beach in the middle of the gorge. After lunch the river eased off and I spotted a platypus. A few rapids at the end tested our tired arms before John's car came into view.

As always, everyone was economical with the truth when regaling their paddling feats of the day. We had only one swimmer in the end—I had to buy the first beers that night, but I swear that the stopper was so big it sucked my booties off!

tion, particularly if it is fitted with air bags. Swim to the bank or assist your rescuer.

White-water techniques

On flat water, edging, or leaning, the boat is not critical; on moving water it is essential. Most capsizes on rivers are due to edging the boat the wrong way. In instances where the paddler edges wrongly, rounded boats, such as Dancers, are more forgiving than

your kayak may dig into the water, causing you to tip over for more underwater discussions.

Breaking in (Figure 2)

This technique is used to move from an eddy (see glossary) into the main current and continue downstream.

Paddle upstream into the current at an angle to the main flow. The angle varies depending on the power of the water—the

By paddling forwards at an angle to the current, the upstream force (your paddling) and downstream force (the current) combine to push the boat sideways. The angle of the boat to the current depends on the force of the water—the stronger the flow, the narrower the angle. Leaning downstream is important (Rule 1).

Running the rapids

White-water kayaking differs from most adventure sports in that the surface you are on is constantly moving and changing. If you make a mistake you can't just stop and go back to try again. And it all happens so quickly!

To avoid becoming river fodder on your first rapids:

- generally stay in the main flow unless it's blocked by a tree or other hazard;
- keep the kayak pointing downstream;
- lean downstream if side-on to the current;
- paddle like mad. This keeps the boat moving forward and thus provides some stability.

Good paddlers appear to glide effortlessly down rapids with minimal effort, but even the experts had to crash and bash their way to the bottom of a rapid in a maelstrom of paddle strokes and facial expressions when they started out. As your skills improve you'll learn to use the water and not fight against it. Small waves, eddies, stoppers (see

Figure 2:
Breaking in

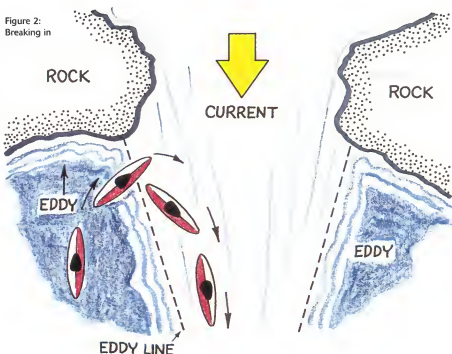
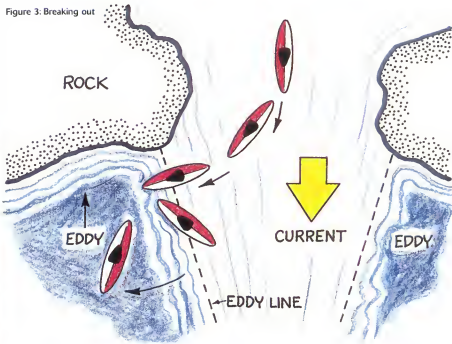


Figure 3: Breaking out



Glossary

Bow draw. An advanced turning stroke used when breaking in and out of the current.

C-to-C roll. A method of uprighting a capsized kayak using a paddle stroke. Can also be done without a paddle (hand roll).

Current. The main flow of water downstream (usually the deepest channel).

Eddy. An area of relatively slack water (or where the current recirculates upstream) usually behind an obstruction in the river.

Eddy line. The transition line between the main current and the calmer water of an eddy.

Low brace. A part turning, part low-support stroke that gives stability when breaking in and out of the current.

Portage. To walk round a rapid carrying your kayak.

Side draw. A paddle stroke used to move the kayak sideways.

Stopper/hole. A breaking wave on the downstream side of a rock or similar underwater obstruction that recirculates like a window blind rolling itself up—preferably without you rolled up inside it!

Support stroke. A recovery stroke to prevent the kayak from capsizing.

Sweep stroke. A turning stroke with the paddle swept in a wide arc from front to back (forward sweep) or back to front (reverse sweep).

glossary), chutes (see illustration on page 28) and even rocks can be used to control your journey down the rapid. Of course everyone stuffs up from time to time and gets a good trashing—it wouldn't be fun otherwise!

Scouting and portaging

If you can't see a clear line down a rapid, break out into an eddy and *exit your kayak and scout*. Fallen trees have a nasty habit of blocking routes down rapids that were clear the week before.

Scouting gives everyone in the group the opportunity to decide whether they want to run the rapid. You can see where to set up any safety ropes as well. Portage (see glossary) if you don't feel comfortable paddling a rapid. Remember to stick to

existing tracks where possible to minimise damage to river-bank vegetation.

Rolling

Swimming in white water is inevitable, particularly when you're starting out. As your skills and experience develop, 'going swimming' becomes less desirable: it's cold and wet; you have to retrieve your gear from the river; you may have a nasty swim down a long rapid—and you may have to buy your rescuers a jug of beer for each spill!

The technique of righting an upturned kayak is called rolling. The best way to learn to do this is on a rolling course in a swimming pool. The C-to-C roll (see glossary) is recommended because it's relatively simple to learn, and allows for an easy transition to

other techniques used to regain an upright position.

However, once you have learned to roll you must also commit to memory the standard excuses for why your roll mysteriously failed on a rapid when it works fine in the pool: 'My spray-deck came off...The paddle was wrenched from my grasp...I was sucked out of my boat!'

River rescue

River-rescue skills are a major component of white-water kayaking, but are sadly overlooked by many paddlers. What would you do if someone was pinned on a boulder in the middle of a river; or was swept upside down beneath an overhanging tree; or became trapped in a collapsed boat; or became stuck in a stopper?

**'Ain't no person
in their right
mind ain't
scared of
white water.'**

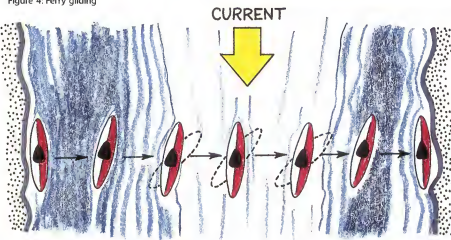
Humphrey Bogart,
African Queen, 1951

Courses, books and videos are the best ways to learn self-rescue- and throw-rope techniques. Carrying safety equipment- and knowing how to use it- is a fundamental part of white-water kayaking.

White-water kayaking is for people of all ages and abilities. It takes you to places inaccessible by other means and gives you thrills, spills and, occasionally, chills. Like all adventure sports there are hazards to be aware of, but a healthy respect for the river



Figure 4: Ferry gliding



As your skills improve you'll be able to move on to the big stuff. Justin Boocock, a member of the national canoe slalom team, paddles the Lea River near Cradle Mountain in Tasmania. Matthew Newton

will ensure an exciting and enjoyable kayaking career. Here's looking at you, kid. 🐼

David Clark became hooked on canoeing at the age of twelve. After 18 years of getting cold and wet in various countries he is still as keen as ever. In between engineering, changing nappies, home renovations, gardening and a little freelance writing he occasionally finds the time to paddle some white water. He lives in Melbourne.





OUTBACK WALKING

Chasms and Clifftops

Bill Geyer works up a thirst in South Australia's arid Gammon Ranges

MUD, THEN DUST. FLOOD, THEN FIRE. WATER, THEN THIRST. Today the Gammon Ranges are arid but half a billion years ago they were beneath a sea. The land is dotted with reminders: slabs of petrified beach sand complete with ripple marks from an ebbing tide millennia before. There are broad creeks and narrow gorges here—bone-dry except for a few precious pools of life-giving water. The smooth boulders which we walked over, the debris piled in great drifts against the river gums and the watermarks sometimes seen on the gorge walls all testify to the torrents which occur here for a few hours every year. No journey would be possible in such a flood while at any other time the lack of water is the challenge.

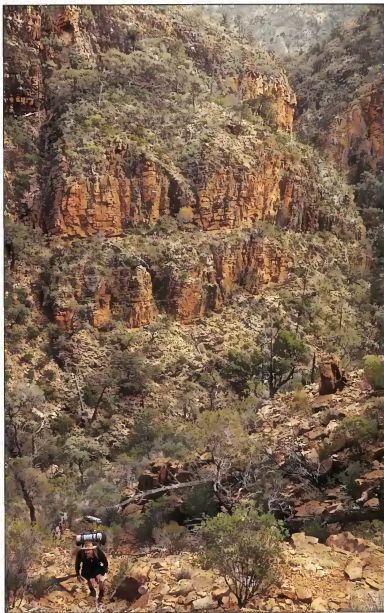
Setting out from the camping ground at Loch Ness Well, our party of four followed the Weetootla Creek upstream. *Callitris* pines and red river gums line the way. Tracks here are few. Our first steps introduced us to a style of walking which was to become very familiar: picking our way over a stony creek-bed, head down, planning each footstep. Such was our concentration that unawares we drew to within a few metres of a euro standing motionless in the dry stream-bed. We looked up just as it took fright and bounded off.

The open, rocky slopes of Worturpa Pound are in stark contrast to the enclosed gorges and exposed, rocky peaks of the Gammon Ranges. Here, a walker returns from Italowie Creek by way of Red Hill. Mt McKinlay looms behind. Michael Hampton

The creek becomes narrower as the hills close in on either side. After walking for two hours we found an inviting camp-site by some small rock pools. Seeking Bunyip Chasm, we dropped our packs and continued upstream. By now we were in a deep gully. After 20 minutes' walk we found the ravine. Diligent predecessors had laid a jumble of logs in strategic places along the fissure, enabling us to clamber up and along. The chasm opened and veered left into a tranquil amphitheatre with walls of fern-covered stone. One wall is a seasonal waterfall which was dry but for ledges of slippery moss. Delicately we scaled it and gained the basin above. Bunyip Chasm is a slot set high in the wall of this basin. A rope and rockclimbing knowledge were invaluable as we climbed up into it. The rope was useful again on the way back when the waterfall's round summit concealed the way down and showed only the amphitheatre floor many metres below.

Our two tents fitted snugly on the patch of flat ground where we had left our packs. Being our first night out, we had the luxury of fresh vegetables. Mistaking his billy for a wok, Alan made a stir fry. Watching how his headtorch kept his two hands free, we three knew that this was the last camping trip on which we would try to do things holding a torch in our mouths! After dinner, water was collected from the nearby pool, boiled in the camp-fire and, to be doubly sure, treated with iodine tablets. What else could you expect from three doctors and a nurse?

In the morning light we realised that we had (brilliantly) camped by the side gorge which



The author and his party grind away up the steep and rocky Steadmans Ridge on their way to Mt John Roberts. Below them lies Bunyip Creek.

Scott Simpson





To reach Bunyip Chasm walkers have to negotiate boulder chokes—complete with crude log ‘ladders’—and an exposed rockclimb up a 20 metre waterfall. This walker is pictured below the slot in the wall that is the final chasm.
Hampton

was our way to the summit of Mt John Roberts. Just inside the entrance to this gorge we turned and began trudging up the flank of loose rock and porcupine grass. The steep climb meant hard work but a rapidly improving view. The creek-bed along which we had made our way the previous day was below us, in the base of a steep valley covered in *Callitris* pines and clumps of the dreaded porcupine grass. Periodically we saw puffs of what looked like smoke here and there among the trees. The ‘burning bush’ mystery was solved when David brushed against one of the pines and a jet of spores shot into the air. On the shoulders of the mountain the vegetation changed, the pines giving way to banksias and other bushes.

Finally reaching the broad summit, aching muscles were forgotten as we tried to take in the immense view. Eastward lay the expanse of Worturpa Pound and the aptly named Red Hill. To the south stood Mt McKinlay, its side streaked by a distinctive

***‘We were all
parched and our
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jokes were
noticeably absent.’***

stripe of scree. To the south-west we could see tomorrow’s goal, Cleft Peak, looking like great orange jaws open to the sky.

We could not find a distinct track down the far side of the mountain. The gorge of the north branch of Itlowie Creek was clearly visible far below us, but we were not sure which of the ridges we should follow to avoid the small cliffs which flank some of them. A final scramble into a small gully led us to the creek-bed. We found Wildflower Creek camp-site, a spacious, flat area dotted with trees and next to reliable but murky pools in the creek-bed. After a late lunch we set out on an excursion upstream into the tributary which had brought us to Wildflower Creek. Free of our packs again, we bounded over the rough creek-bed. After many twists and turns, we came upon a wall of rock in the right bank of the creek. Near its end was the mouth of the gully we sought. Following this branch, we found a deep, terraced gorge which bends sharply back upon itself as though one turn of a gigantic, spiral staircase. This is the Old Man of Itlowie. Further upstream we found the dry waterfall marking the start of Shelf Chasm, but the light was fading and we were forced to return. Back at Wildflower Creek our ritual of fetching, boiling and chemically treating water was re-enacted. That night our camp-site was raided by a feral cat. After licking out Scott’s cup and chewing up our sponge it attempted to make off with a Trangia pot! Scott gave

chase by torchlight and retrieved our utensils. The incident did nothing to lessen our hatred for these creatures (see text box below).

The next day we headed upstream along the banks of Wildflower Creek. We followed a walking track—one of the few times we did so during the entire trip. Cleft Creek flowed into Wildflower Creek just over a kilometre upstream. The ridge to the west of the Cleft Creek gorge necessitated a steep climb over sharp stones and porcupine grass. Grass trees and a few stunted bushes are the only other vegetation. A cluster of feral goats looked on from the far side of the gorge. A stiff westerly breeze seemed to be intensifying with each upward step. Sudden gusts threatened to blow off our hats or

even blast us into Cleft Creek gorge. Several times as we plodded up the ridge the way ahead was blocked: a wall of rock would require hands, knees and toes to scale. The last of these was the most formidable and would have required pack-hauling for a direct assault. Fortunately it was possible to skirt to one side of it, scramble up a scree slope and into a rocky slot which led to its top.

This brought us to the summit of the north ridge of Cleft Peak, the half of the mountain to the west of the 'Cleft', the summit proper being the eastern half. Scott and David prepared lunch while Alan and I descended to the saddle linking the two halves. From here we had a magnificent view looking north into the gorge of Cleft Creek.

Then it was a steep climb to the actual summit for views of Mt John Roberts, the pounds and Mt McKinlay. Our two companions were tiny specks on the opposite peak. We could also see the profile of the north ridge which we had just ascended. From this angle it looked impossible! Beneath a cairn were two logbooks in a steel box. Our September entry was only the ninth for that year. The first entry in the older logbook was dated 1968 although we knew that the mountain had first been climbed by Warren Bonython 20 years earlier. (After numerous pioneering bushwalks throughout the Flinders Ranges, Bonython became the first to walk the Flinders from end to end. A succession of trips between May 1967 and November 1968 took him

THE FERALS

Although familiar with the damage caused by rabbits, mice plagues and hoofed, domesticated animals, few Australians are aware of the toll taken by other feral creatures in our arid interior.

It has been estimated that there are 12 000 000 feral cats in Australia compared with 3 000 000 domestic cats. Soon after European colonisation they established themselves in some of our most inhospitable country. While travelling south along the Northern Territory/Western Australia border in 1897 a British prospector met two Aboriginal women with a freshly killed domestic cat.

Provided that they can find fresh quarry, cats survive without the need for fresh water. They hide in empty burrows or hollow logs by day and hunt by night. Each cat eats the equivalent of seven native rats or ten birds every week. The cats will attack anything of their own size or smaller, which means that most of our endangered desert animals are vulnerable. Meanwhile their only predators are dingoes and people. They also transmit toxoplasmosis, a protozoan disease which kills many marsupials but which is harmless to cats. Eradicating the feral cats is proving extremely difficult. To track and shoot them is very labour-intensive considering the vast areas concerned. They are notoriously disinterested in baits. However, an additive that is irresistible to cats is being developed.

Our country harbours approximately two million feral goats. They are an enormous problem throughout Australia's rangelands. They consume all kinds of plant material including twigs, new shoots and flowers. Their destruction of young plants interferes with the life cycle of our delicate arid trees and shrubs. They can stand on their hind legs and lean against tree-trunks to browse, depriving other animals of food. Being hoofed, their travels worsen erosion. In the Gammons the goat population is being tackled by several methods. Traditional owners from the neighbouring community of Nepabunna have mustering rights. For three weeks of the year the park is closed and teams of markspeople stake out waterholes to shoot the goats. Finally, a helicopter is used to eradicate the goats from otherwise inaccessible areas. This vigorous approach is yielding good results.

Further reading

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- Sharp, Kerry 1992, 'Killer Cats', *Nature Territory*, no 1, pp 28–32.
- 'The Feral Goat, *Capra hircus*', Australian Nature Conservation Agency.
- 'No Kidding', reporter Prue Adams, 'Landline', ABC, televised 22 December 1996.

Special thanks to Trevor Naismith and Robin Young, SA Parks & Wildlife, Northern Division.

Negotiating the 'virtual rockclimb' up to the camp at Rover Rockhole. Packs had to be hauled but the reward was a camp-site with pools of water.
Simpson



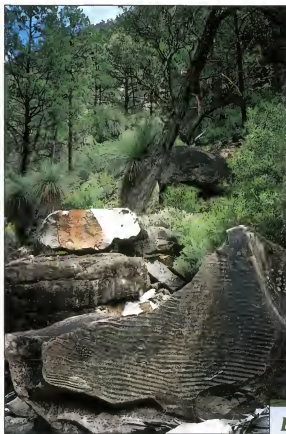
all the way from Crystal Brook in the south to the appropriately named Mt Hopeless in the north.)

We were to follow the north-west ridge back to the upper reaches of Wildflower Creek. Coming off the west shoulder of this ridge, we slid and slipped down a treacherous, scree-strewn gully, at last plummeting into a broad creek bed. We rested briefly, our spirits up as it was only mid-afternoon and we thought that we would soon be at Rover Rockhole: it had been a hot climb and our stores of water were low. We followed the creek and entered a tributary which we had picked out as we descended Cleft Peak. As we followed this upstream it gradually became apparent that this gorge was not the one in which we had intended to be. Finally arriving at an unexpected fork in the creek, we were thankful to find a tiny, tadpole-infested rock pool. We collected a litre of water. After splitting into pairs and reconnoitring each of the forks we gave up and turned back the way we had come. We were all parched and our usual chatter and jokes were noticeably absent. Things were grim but we all remained calm and determined.

After we rejoined the creek-bed, we headed downstream hoping that we had merely picked the wrong tributary. Scott dashed up into the next gorge. This was not the one either. Miraculously, Alan found two welcome mandarins in his rucksack. It was now deep dusk. The torches came out and we continued along the creek bed aiming for the certain water at the Wildflower Creek campsite. After half an hour it was dark but we realised that the walls of the gorge were closing in ahead of us: we were somehow moving upstream. We were amazed that our compasses showed we were heading north-west when we had imagined that we were heading east! On our first attempt to rejoin the main creek-bed again we found that we were moving up into a tributary. By the time we re-entered the main stream it was apparent that our nocturnal navigation was only wasting precious energy and moisture. We found a half-flat patch of ground and arranged our sleeping-bags. That precious litre of water was divided up: one cup each. We decided that yoghurt-topped muesli bars and the jelly babies out of the scroggin were the least thirst-engendering foods we had. As we lay in the darkness we tried to figure out where we had gone wrong and what we should do. Surprisingly, after we had been resting quietly for a while our mouths no longer felt parched. Bats squeaked and whizzed overhead. Scorpio wheeled through the cloudless night sky. Fortunately we were spared a view of Aquarius, the Water-carrier.

The next day we started early before it grew warm and carried only our water-bottles. Our packs were stacked in a

conspicuous spot in the creek-bed. Once Scott had climbed a nearby hill to get reoriented, he led us to a gorge further north. Even as we trudged upstream doubts and anxieties remained. The gorge opened out into a vast cathedral of orange rock that is streaked black and green by water and moss. A trickle of a waterfall could be seen at its far end and pools of beautiful, clear water lay on its floor: Rover Rockhole. We realised that we had passed by this tributary without even seeing it the night before.



While much of the rock in the Flinders Ranges is tilted to form jagged ridges, the Gammons sandstone is flat-lying. As a result, the myriad of gorges that incise the plateau are among the best places to see ripple rock. The corrugated surface betrays the rock's origins as sediment deposited in shallow seas some 600 million years ago. Quentin Chester

Much relieved we gathered and treated as much water as we could. After going back for our rucksacks we scaled the waterfall, hauling our packs up after us. Above the falls is a shallower gorge with more pools of water, and a camp-site. Scott produced a hip-flask of Scotch with which we celebrated our deliverance. For lunch David prepared a curry, which was to have been the previous night's dinner. David and I were content to put our feet up while Scott

and Alan set out for a quick look at Fern Chasm, returning at dusk. Scott produced another treat for dinner that night—the Incredible Expanding Rice and Lentils à la Concrete. Even when the billy was (accidentally) knocked over not one flake fell out—so we still had to eat it!

Before we left the following day we made an entry in the logbook by the waterfall's base. The first entry told how the place got its name—in 1954 members of an Adelaide college's Rover camp camped here. We

were surprised that groups of ten or more were not uncommon. Where could they all camp and, more to the point, how could they possibly find enough water?

We headed downstream. A cairn marks the start of a very steep but well-defined track leading up to a saddle in the western wall of the gorge. This was the elusive Wildflower Saddle that we'd missed when descending from Cleft Peak. On its far side a steep scramble brought us down to the ever enlarging gullies that were the birthplace of a water-course—Wildflower Creek. We followed this to our camp-site of only three nights before and then into the dry bed of Itlowie Creek. Only a short stretch remained but even as we were striding across the barren Gibber Plain toward our vehicle at Loch Ness Well a ferocious wind storm blew up and buffeted us mercilessly. Behind us the Gammons disappeared in a shimmering grey haze. We had survived, but we were being given a final reminder of who was master.

Bill Geyer

got his first taste of bushwalking in the Scouts. Successive university summer holidays were spent in Tasmania, Nepal and Botswana. At last his attention was drawn closer to home: the Flinders Ranges. The trip described was only his second to the Gammons. Bill works as a country general practitioner in the Barossa Valley.



Further reading

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- Chester, Quentin 1987, 'Ranging the Gammons', *Wild*, no 23, pp 36–41.
- Heard, Adrian 1990, *A Walking Guide to the Northern Flinders Ranges*, State Publishing South Australia.
- Hopkins, Nigel 1990, 'The Flinders Ranges: Storehouse of Beauty, Graveyard of Dreams', *Australian Geographic*, no 17, pp 32–53.

The best map to use is the *Illawarra* 1:50 000 Lands-map.

LOST!

Tales from big Victorian searches, by *Monica Chapman*



Help at hand. An unidentified man being assisted by 'a cast of thousands'. Victoria Police Search & Rescue Squad collection

IN 1949 ALFRED HOWIE WENT MISSING WHILE walking at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. Despite extensive searching, he was never seen again. It was this search which prompted the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs (FVWC) to establish a formal search and rescue section.

It has now been 50 years since Bushwalkers Search & Rescue (BS&R) formed. Members have helped on 73 bush searches, and the missing person has been found alive on more than half of these.

This article looks at some of the bigger searches in which Victorian bushwalkers have taken part in the last 50 years.

LITTLE BOY LOST

On 27 June 1987 Patrick 'Paddy' Hildebrand, an intellectually disabled nine-year-old, was reported missing after wandering off from his family while on a walk along the Lilly Pilly Gully track, Wilsons Promontory. National Park rangers, together with local police, police search & rescue personnel and about 30 State Emergency Service

(SES) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers had searched tracks and roads the following day and by mid-afternoon had found Hildebrand's rain hat.

BS&R was called out that morning and 25 members arrived by late afternoon. A further 44 arrived early on 29 June and another group arrived on 1 July. In total 94 BS&R members took part during the seven days to 3 July when the search was called off.

The total number of searchers from all groups was about 150 including the police search & rescue squad, local police, the dog squad, local SES and CFA volunteers, Aboriginal trackers and relatives. A helicopter fitted with a heat-sensing device scanned the area at night, but to no avail. Despite all efforts, Hildebrand was never found.

Helicopters played an important role on this search. When BS&R members completed a sweep down a ridge or gully, they were airlifted back to the top of the ridge to begin their next sweep. In this way a much greater area was covered, but it had its dangers, too. Large branches were broken



Bob Hannah remarked: 'We're still pushing on in the expectation we will find him alive.'

While Hannah was contending with the demands of coordinating the search, the police also had to deal with criticisms from the regional director of the SES. The coroner's report exonerated the decisions made by the search coordinators, however. In his report the coroner stated, 'On the facts set out in the Findings there is found to have been adequate planning of the search; proper liaison with the SES; and appropriate contact search (or line search) on the first full day of the search'. Hildebrand's mother thanked everyone (The Sun, 4 July): 'They said they always take pride in their work but this time they were tackling it as if it was their own child and you really do your best if you do that.'

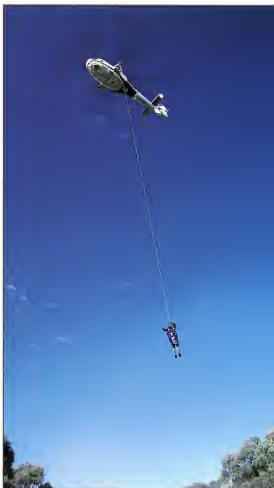
Large-scale searches also took place at Wilsons Promontory before the formation of BS&R in which bushwalkers played a vital role not only in the actual searching, but in the planning of search strategy and deployment of teams.

A LATE START

In April 1949 Alfred Howie, 63, was reported missing at Wilsons Promontory. He and his companion, Moreton Colechin, started an overnight walk along the rough track to Sealers Cove. After a short time Howie attempted to change into long trousers. He told Colechin not to wait and that he'd catch up. Unhurriedly, his friend continued but Howie never 'caught up'.

across his friend but confident that Howie would be all right as he'd had plenty of food. That afternoon Colechin related the events to ranger A J Watson. He spent the next two days doing some short walks around Tidal River before returning to Melbourne. Colechin's intentions had been to accompany Howie for the first part of the trip, only, and to leave Howie to walk to the lighthouse on the better defined track on his own.

A week after Howie was last seen, the ranger became concerned and reported his



Helicopters played an important role on the search for 'Paddy' Hildebrand at Wilsons Promontory in June 1987. When Bushwalkers Search & Rescue members completed a sweep down a ridge or gully, they were airlifted back to the top of the ridge to begin their next sweep. (A helicopter winches a searcher during search and rescue practice.) John Chapman

fears to his superior. The police, however, were not notified for a further three days. Although the ranger did some searching on his own on foot and horseback, the official search did not begin until 6 May, some 16 days after Howie was last sighted!

You never give up hope — Paddy's mum

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

By MEL MARRAS

A MOTHER'S love was mixed with brutal anguish yesterday as hopes faded of finding her missing son at Wilsons Promontory.



from trees by the force of the wind generated by the helicopters' blades. At times these fell perilously close to searchers below waiting to be winched into the helicopter.

There was significant media coverage of this search and the subsequent inquest. Headlines included 'Day four, and still no sign of Patrick' (The Age), and 'Where are you Paddy?' and 'Time is running out' (The Sun). Hildebrand's mother Christine (The Sun, 2 July) said: 'Things can and do happen that defy any explanation and I just hope so much that that's the case here, I just have to keep hoping.' Search coordinator Inspector

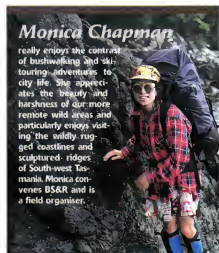
Colechin pushed on to Windy Saddle alone, expecting Howie to catch up. He waited there for about half an hour but decided to continue as he was getting cold. He reached Sealers Creek after making his way through the swamp, but decided against crossing it as the tide was in and deep water washed over the timbers on the bridge. Colechin returned along the same route through the swamp. At dusk he reached a clearing near a bridge over a small creek, the only clearing he'd seen along the way, and decided to camp.

The next morning he returned to Tidal River, unhappy that he had not come

Two planes flew up and down the Prom. About 50 searchers, including walking club members, were out in the field in appalling weather conditions. Some had walked in while others were dropped ashore by boat. By the end of the third week the number of searchers was down to about ten. The following weekend a group of 20 boys from Geelong Grammar, led by the redoubtable John Béchervaise, landed by boat at Sealers Cove with another group, led by locals, to comb the area between Waterloo and Oberson Bay.

Unable to concede defeat, the police officer in charge of the search, Senior Constable Fleischer, devised yet another plan and requested personnel from headquarters, but two days later these plans dissolved and the remaining searchers went home. Howie's son returned six weeks later and then again a month after that, but to no avail. Alfred Howie was never seen again.

It was this search which prompted the FVWC to establish a formal search & rescue section. Much work was done analysing previous searches, formulating and documenting workable procedures.



Monica Chapman

really enjoys the contrast of bushwalking and ski-touring adventures to city life. She appreciates the beauty and harshness of our more remote wild areas and particularly enjoys visiting the wild, rugged coastlines and sculptured ridges of South-west Tasmania. Monica convenes BS&R and is a field organiser.

'A CAST OF THOUSANDS'

Further afield, Mihram Haig, 21, went missing from a group on Mt Baw Baw on 12 June 1955. It was the Queen's Birthday weekend and the group had intended to make a start to the ski season; however, snow cover was very poor. The group was grooming a nearby slope when members realised that they had not seen Haig since 4 pm. It was thought that he might have ventured to the summit, so that area was searched until midnight.

The next day two of the group headed out by way of Neulynes Mill past a large group of Rover Scouts camped there. Advising them of the situation, the pair continued, driving to Noojee to raise the alarm. The following morning the Rovers teamed up with the others at the Baw Baw Ski Club Hut, spending the entire day searching. They were joined later by police, farmers, timber- and forestry workers. In two days some 150 searchers were deployed to search from the summit to the hut. More walkers arrived and were given the task of

searching the eastern slopes of the plateau, an area outside the range of local searchers.

The search organisers considered the possibility that Haig, having reached the summit, had become disoriented and continued north. Searching was extended northwards where the terrain is rough. Dense fog, rain and sleet reduced visibility and thick undergrowth slowed progress. A searcher went missing in the Faith, Hope and Charity Creek systems, but was later found safe. Around that time a lighter, thought to be of a type used by Haig, was found on Mt Erica. This prompted the organisers to es-

search organisers, however, were granted the power of veto, and a screening panel was set up to assess the suitability of new volunteers. The newcomers began to arrive and, together with bushwalkers, were directed into the area between the Plateau and the East Tanjil River. Some were also sent to the East Tyers River.

The search was described in a Victorian Mountain Tramping Club newsletter: 'We had been bashing down Hope Creek all day, through a tangled hell of ice-covered logs, ferns, scrub and huge granite boulders that broke up the stream into a series of

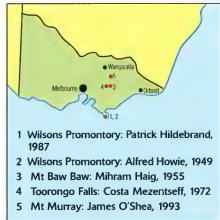


The search for Mihram Haig at Mt Baw Baw in June 1955 continued for ten days, but he was never seen again. Pictured are Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs members Stuart Brookes, writing, and W Buchanan, second from right, assisting police. Brookes collection

establish a second search base at Erica and deploy new searchers into this area. Stuart Brookes was appointed by field organiser Bill Bewsher to coordinate activities at Erica. Brookes commented, 'I slept in a police cell the first couple of nights and was then taken in by a forest foreman'.

Though the lighter turned out not to be Haig's, some searchers continued in this area, while others returned to the northern end of the plateau. Between 13 and 22 June about 205 searchers scoured the difficult terrain in deteriorating weather conditions. Searchers arrived and left; many returned a second time.

On 18 June State Cabinet reviewed the activities of the search thus far and sent Police Commissioner Porter and Minister of Forests Whately to the search base to assess the situation first hand. Contrary to reports, search operations were well under control. However, Porter stated that the government was going to revitalise the search by obtaining the services of 300 additional people! The



- 1 Wilsons Promontory: Patrick Hildebrand, 1987
- 2 Wilsons Promontory: Alfred Howie, 1949
- 3 Mt Baw Baw: Mihram Haig, 1955
- 4 Toorongo Falls: Costa Mezentseff, 1972
- 5 Mt Murray: James O'Shea, 1993

casades. Progress was pitifully slow, much less than half a mile per hour.'

Searchers continued to arrive but were poorly equipped for the conditions and were not sent into the field. The search was called off and Mihram Haig's disappearance remains a mystery.

Brookes commented: 'I was particularly impressed by the degree of cooperation from the Erica townspeople towards the city bushies. They rallied around and gave every assistance, from providing meals and accommodation to hot baths for those who wanted them.' He continued: 'They were not very wealthy either, but wanted to contribute what they could to the search. This search provided the major push for the formation of the police search & rescue squad.'

THE MARATHON SEARCH

Another unresolved disappearance, that of five-year-old Costa Mezentseff, sparked the longest search to date. On 27 August 1972 Mezentseff went missing during a family outing to Toorongo Falls, near Noojee in the Mt Baw Baw area, and it was expected that he would be located the next day. All that was found in the immediate area on the first day of searching was his jumper, so the search continued the following day in heavy rain. By 30 August Mezentseff's mother was losing hope. In that day's *Sun* she stated: 'I thank everybody for what they are doing for us. But I think he must be dead.' However, renewed hope was brought the next day with the discovery of fresh footprints. The *Sun* headline on 31

August read, 'Mountain boy still alive, say rescue police'. Search police thought that Mezentseff could be fearful of the noise made by searchers and might be avoiding them.

More BS&R members joined the search. However, by the fifth day it was concluded that the little boy had died and the search was scaled down. Still more searchers volunteered. In all 100 BS&R members were involved, together with many locals and police. Towards the end of the 13-day search, most bushwalkers had returned home. Those left assisted locals and others who were prepared to continue searching. On 9 September the last handful of searchers departed the Toorongo area.

AGAINST THE ODDS

The *Herald-Sun's* front-page headline on 30 April 1993 read, 'The Great Survivor'. It is

indeed true that the then Industrial Relations Commissioner, James O'Shea, is one of the great survivors. After falling and hitting his head, 46-year-old O'Shea spent seven days lost in rugged bush near Mt Murray, west of Mt Hotham. He was wearing only shorts and a shirt, carrying a haversack containing some chocolate, sweets and a water bottle. Fortunately, he also had a box of matches. However, when he was found he was close to the limit of his endurance, as evidenced by the touching farewell message he wrote on his haversack to his wife.

The search began on 25 April 1993, four nights after O'Shea became lost, and continued to 29 April when he was spotted from a helicopter. BS&R members were instrumental in narrowing down the area in which to look. Some groups camped out overnight but without getting much sleep.

'DEAR ROSIE—LOST. CONCUSSED. BROKE GLASSES. SORRY. I LOVE YOU AND THE KIDS.'

HOW BUSH SEARCHES ARE CONDUCTED

Although searches are never alike, general assumptions can be made during initial planning that will determine the type of techniques implemented.

Reconnaissance searching

Usually the first technique to be used, a reconnaissance search entails searching along roads or tracks accessible to vehicles, or scanning cleared areas by helicopter (weather permitting) within the area of highest probability. Other likely features such as huts, camp-sites and road junctions are also checked. The aim is to find the lost person(s) quickly.

If the search continues, this technique is often combined with delivering or collecting search groups and may be continued as patrols at night. It covers substantial ground quickly and provides search planners with information on the terrain.

Feature searching

This technique—sometimes called a general search—is used to cover areas of high probability quickly. Search groups are deployed along spurs, creeks and tracks inaccessible to vehicles. Searchers are usually well spaced—but within easy calling distance of each other—across the feature. Groups stop to call out and listen for a response at regular intervals.

Line searching

To cover an area of high probability thoroughly, a line- or contact search is made. Line searching is done by groups of ten to twelve and is very time consuming. Longer lines are difficult to control. Each searcher maintains sight and voice contact with those on either side to the extent that they are able to visually search the area in between. In dense scrub searches may only be a metre apart so as not to miss anything.

Lines often begin by using a track or linear feature as one boundary and another feature, such as a creek or track, as the turn-around boundary. Toilet paper marks boundaries at eye height.

If only one group is used, on completion of its pass- or 'sweep'—from feature to feature the group re-forms its line and follows its marked boundary back again. This is continued until it has covered its allocated area.

If more than one group is used, the first group moves along marking its boundary on each side. The next group starts a few minutes later, following one of the boundaries marked by the previous group and marking its own boundary. The next group follows on from this and at the end of the sweep the first group re-forms the line and returns along the boundary of the last group and so on until the area is covered.

Responsibility for searches

The police are responsible for all searches. BS&R is one of a number of organisations called on to assist the police on a search. Each organisation provides expertise and the labour required for most large-scale searches. BS&R attends searches only at the request of Victoria Police.

On a search

The BS&R field organiser for a search reports directly to the police and is responsible for the management of all BS&R members in the field, under the direction of the police. He or she represents BS&R searchers at discussions and planning meetings with the police.

The field organiser usually appoints a deputy and arranges searchers into groups of four including a group leader. On arrival at the search base the police brief the field organiser, who then instructs all BS&R members either directly or by way of their group leaders.

Searchers settled down next to logs or against large trees wrapped in their tents. Some were lucky and found small, flat spots no larger than a lyre-bird mound on which to pitch a tent. SES personnel line-searched along tracks, and trail bikes traversed the old roads and tracks as far as they were able. From where they left off, BS&R members continued.

I still vividly remember the concerns of one group heading down what was to be known as the 'main spur'. They came across flames to knee height and exploding rocks and, after considering the dangers, had no option but to abandon their search pattern. My group was in the gully towards which the fire was heading. The next day we searched the spur past the burnt-out area and, along with other groups travelling down the surrounding spurs, had to battle wild raspberries and blackberries, stinging nettles and loose rock on very steep ground. Those in the creek found the going rough, too, having to wade, and clamber over slippery rocks and mossy logs to make any progress.

We were very relieved when O'Shea was found alive. He was fortunate indeed that the days were warm and sunny and the overnight temperatures only a little below zero, that is, until the last night when it was noticeably colder. This was a marked contrast to most other searches.



BS&R members are ever ready to assist police during searches for people lost in remote or difficult terrain. Visit the Web page www.c3plus.com.au/bsr if you are interested in becoming involved. From this site you can access Web pages for search and rescue groups for bushwalkers in other States.

CHANGING MILLENNIUMS

As we step from one millennium into the next, this *Wild* feature reviews the past and considers what the future may hold for Australian wilderness



David Ziegler in state-of-the-art bushwalking attire, South-west Tasmania, 1975. Note the hippie headband, oiled japara jacket, woollen shirt and army-disposals woollen trousers.

Grant Dixon

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Roger Caffin reflects on the changing bushwalking experience

WHY IS IT THAT WITH ALL THE TECHNOLOGICAL developments of the last 30 years, it is still just as hard to haul a heavy pack up a steep slope under a hot sun? It seems that bushwalking hasn't got any easier! As we focus on looking ahead into the next millennium, this article considers what has, and hasn't, changed in Australian bushwalking over the last few decades.

Like many others, I started walking as a Boy Scout, in the late 1950s. I had a pair of hob-nailed cadet boots with steel horseshoes on the heels; an uncomfortable, ex-army, square canvas knapsack; two blankets and some big blanket pins; a cape/groundsheet and a billy. That was pretty typical gear for

those who set off into the unknown. Some areas like South-west Tasmania didn't have any maps apart from a few bushwalker sketches; in other areas like the Wollemi in New South Wales, the topographic maps had major errors. As for guidebooks and track notes: forget it! When Andy Macqueen began bushwalking some 40 years ago, he and his companions went out as 'sort of explorers to discover what lay beyond the end of the road'.

Changes in gear are very visible. I recall the thrill of getting a Paddy made Federation A-frame rucksack: far better than that overloaded knapsack. But I had to bend from the waist to balance it, and it dragged on my shoulders when I filled it up, so after a few

years I made an H-frame pack out of wood and canvas. It was much better: I carried about 35 kilograms in it through South-west Tassie in the 1960s. It allowed me to walk upright although my friends had to pull me to my feet. I suppose that the rest of my gear was still too heavy! Now I have an internal-frame rucksack and two smaller, lighter Cordura packs as well—and I carry a lot less.

Soon I got a Paddy made green japara wall-tent, just big enough for two lads in good weather. It was OK if you kept it well proofed and didn't touch the inside surface—and it didn't rain too long. There wasn't much spare space, though. I added snow flaps along the walls and pitched it on the snow on Victoria's Mt Feathertop one winter

in the early 1960s. I woke up to a sensation of pinpricks all over my face. My plastic groundsheet had slid slightly out of the tent and it was snowing on my face! It was time for an upgrade, so I designed and built a proofed-nylon mountain dome tent, possibly the first made in Australia. At two metres square, there was plenty of room inside: a luxury tent. Eventually, the tent burst like paper, so we bought an all-weather alpine tent in which we don't have to put up with 'spindrift blowing in the gaps covering all your gear', as guidebook author John Chap-

man recalls. Curiously, once we switched from blankets to sleeping-bags, advances in bush bedclothes slowed. We are still using superdown filling—just like in the 1960s. Some synthetic fills are at the low end of the market, but they don't beat the duck. The outer fabric lightened a bit when we switched from japara to silk-like Pertex, then Dry-Loft eliminated the drips from the tent roof, at a price. The ritual of drying sleeping-bags around the fire seems to have gone, too.

The comfort of bedding has improved considerably. Self-inflating, open-cell sleeping-mats are much warmer and more comfortable than sleeping on the ground (let alone the snow!), and are a great improvement on cutting down and stacking scrub for a mattress each night. I can remember little tutorials in books on how to layer the scrub for the best comfort. Can you imagine the effect if everyone did that at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria, today?

Food is another area where technology has made our lives easier. Modern, freeze-dried foods beat the hell out of the Spam and Vesta from the old days. Exotic cooking ideas

popular camping places? Yuck! Gas stoves use more fuel, but they sure are easy to use! They seem to have almost eliminated the ritual of making a lunch-time fire for a cup of tea.

So maybe our bushwalking gear has improved, along with safety? As John Chapman put it, 'we "survived" before, but as we were not comfortable, we spent more time getting dry and warm—we did push the risk factor to a higher level'. Thinking about some early snow trips with japara tents, I agree with him. On the other hand, older walkers like Fred Elliott think that gear doesn't help all that much; Alex Colley reckons that 'the best protection is experience'. It's a bit of both, maybe.

Mind you, there is so much high-tech gear available today that we have a new set of risks. The first is the cost: now you can spend a fortune on basic gear, whereas before bushwalking was a low-cost hobby. Then there are all those lovely, little things you just seem to need. (See Quentin Chester's article in *Wild* no 57) But some inventions are both useful and cheap; Andy Macqueen's vote for the greatest invention is the wine bladder

'Gone are the days of getting your entire bushwalking outfit from St Vincent de Paul.'

man recalls. Along the way we stopped cutting down saplings for poles and pegs for our tent each night, and the bush said thank you.

Several decades ago our rainwear consisted of capes or ponchos. These were OK on tracks in thick forests, except that they funnelled all the rain down your knees and into your boots, and in windy conditions they streamed out from your neck like a scarf. The New Zealand oiled japara jackets we all eagerly bought in the mid-1960s were a great improvement, but you still got wet in heavy rain, smelt strongly, and the hoods were tiny. They were marginal on the ridges in South-west Tassie when the weather turned foul. The introduction of polyvinyl chloride-proofed nylon was a failure: after a year or so the proofing fell off. This left a bit of a market hole, which Gore-Tex and the many breathable polyurethane materials soon filled.

Our winter clothing has changed, too. Now we wear thermal underwear, Polartec tops and Thinsulate padded trousers in the snow—a far cry from the cotton trousers and old, woollen jumpers with which we started. The modern combination works well: the shell wear doesn't let nearly as much water in, and the synthetic materials dry quickly with body heat because the fibres don't absorb water as natural threads do. Consequently, safety and comfort have certainly improved a lot.

People used to light big fires when the rain stopped to dry everything out (or scorch it). And gone are the days of getting your entire bushwalking outfit from the local St Vincent de Paul shop. Bush wear has even become sexy: the rockclimbers at Lindfield (Sydney) look like something out of *Penthouse**, says endurance athlete Peter Treseder. Wow!



Camp-site at Haven Lake in the Western Arthurs, South-west Tasmania, in the 1970s. Tent flies were the latest thing and improved comfort in the old japara tents. Without a floor or fly screen, these tiny tents served us well on many trips. John Chapman

from overseas have added a lot of variety, too. Of course, once upon a time we would have had to cook outside over a smoky fire no matter the weather conditions; today we can remain warm and dry inside our tents with the stove purring in the alcove.

Even though stoves have been around for a long time and have improved only a little over the years, there have been two big changes in recent decades: the widespread adoption of stoves in place of fires and the introduction of the miniature gas stove. Fuel-stove-only alpine regions have helped to accelerate this swing, but I think that it is a good idea, even in the lowlands. Have you seen the immense fire sites spreading out over

(as a water-storage device, of course). 'And it comes free with every four litres of wine!' Wine bladders are certainly better than the old japara water buckets, which leaked everywhere. Finally, what about the Global Positioning System, mobile phone and emergency rescue beacon? Should you carry them? According to Peter Treseder, Kosciuszko Trust wanted to make beacons compulsory for personal safety, but as John Chapman points out, 'they encourage poorly equipped parties to head out and ask to be rescued when they have a problem'.

Sometimes we get the impression that there are fewer bushwalkers today, and not any young ones. According to Andy Mac-

queen, 'my bushwalking club formed 32 years ago, and the average age seems to have advanced by just about that figure! The foundation stalwarts are the most active even now.' If there are fewer walkers, why are there hordes of gear shops in the cities? It seems that outdoor gear has become very fashionable and is now mainstream big business. In fact, it can be difficult buying a good bushwalking parka these days: so many are designed for fashionable 'street/travel' wear, and 'expensive' does not necessarily mean 'suitable for bushwalking'.

At other times we find that too many people are out there. About half of our

confronting today's walkers. John Chapman thinks that the guidebook trend has gone too far: 'many clubs insist that leaders preview a walk before taking a club group...many club members want to be entertained and looked after without having to slog it out and push themselves'.

There's been a more insidious change, too: the commercialisation of the bush into an adventure playground, or 'the shift towards thrill sports', as Andy Macqueen calls it. Consider the number of commercial adventure companies which will package up the Great Australian Outdoors and serve it to you with maximum thrill and safety. Just pay

furniture van or a train to go on a trip, partly because few of us had reliable cars. Then we would have to walk some distance to get into the bush. Now we have better maps, cars and roads: lots more access. Of course, the increased access has created its own problems: the bush has been carved up with many more tracks and, suddenly, not much wilderness is left.

Decades ago you were unlikely to meet anyone when bushwalking. And if you did, they were probably other bushwalkers or the occasional mountain cattleman on horseback. Today you're not only likely to meet more bushwalkers along the way, but all too frequently you will come across people in four-wheel-drive vehicles and on trail bikes, mountain bikes and on horses as well. It's a jungle out there! Sadly, in many areas the bush is showing the signs of all this activity; erosion, water pollution, noise and rubbish are all part of the problem. Previously I could safely drink the water anywhere in the mountains; now there are various bugs.

In fact, the environmental impact has become so great we have a special three-letter acronym just for bushwalking: MIB, or Minimal Impact Bushwalking. The code has changed how many of us treat the bush. Take track marking: walkers used to break



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Equipped for the bush or a voyage to Mars? Outdoors gear and clothing have certainly changed over the years, and plenty of 'brilliant inventions' like the Alert suit have fallen by the wayside. This advert appeared in Wild no 7 in 1983.

States have introduced limits on the number of people allowed into certain bush areas at any one time, and Tassie is working on it. I can remember when you wouldn't meet anyone for a week! It seems that the idea of going bushwalking, at least for day walks on the more popular routes, has become more mainstream as well.

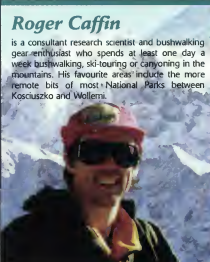
Perhaps that's it! While bushwalking was mostly a pretty gung ho business in, say, the 1960s, today there is a plethora of walking clubs apparently dedicated to the 'civilised ramble' of just a half day or so. Indeed, this is where much of the growth appears to have occurred. Many of these clubs appear to be perambulatory introduction agencies—more likely to produce a good match than a good sweat!

When Wild commenced publication bushwalkers relied almost entirely on sketch maps rather than the topographic maps widely used today. Track notes, where they existed at all, were generally confined to the pages of low-circulation club newsletters. For the most part guidebooks were a thing of the future—a far cry from the paper mountain

your money and get a thrill—no experience needed. The growth is not just restricted to the 'adventure' operators servicing the punters' needs: There's a whole industry of those instructing the instructors, not to mention those accrediting the instructors instructing the instructors.

According to David Noble, authority on walking and canyoning in the Blue Mountains, the trouble is 'guides allow the complete bumbly to take to the bush and pay someone to be responsible for them...Like a theme park!'. In addition, as Fred Elliott has observed, where payment is involved clients expect to be 100 per cent safe—which is a worry for park managers. Their concern has produced a whole subindustry of land managers, 'safety officers' and other assorted, suitably titled bureaucrats whose jobs are to control and regulate outdoors activities and, where they deem necessary, to modify the actual environment to make it more 'user friendly', by upgrading and rerouting tracks, and so on.

Access to the bush has changed in other ways. A group of us used to pile into an old



Roger Caffin
 is a consultant research scientist and bushwalking gear enthusiast who spends at least one day a week bushwalking, ski-touring or canyoning in the mountains. His favourite areas include the more remote bits of most National Parks between Kosciuszko and Wollemi.

small branches and put tape on trees to mark routes. Do this today and every tree in sight would be branchless or covered in tape!

Do walkers face further restrictions? Was David Noble exaggerating when he wrote: 'Maybe walking off track will eventually be banned! Concrete tracks only! Maybe the bush will be out of bounds?' In fact, for fear of being sued, the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service has already placed restrictions on activities which might be 'dangerous'.

And that brings us to a new concern for those participating in outdoors activities in Australia: accreditation. At present national outdoors leadership standards are being created; however, John Chapman suggests that 'bushwalking groups may eventually have to respond by issuing their own certificates—or [they will] get locked out'.

At any rate, it's a long way from where I started as a kid. ☺

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**What are the most important Australian conservation issues for the next two decades?
Three of our most prominent activists speak from the heart...**

Saving the Valley of the Giants

On the eastern edge of Tasmania's World Heritage Area, the Styx River valley is under threat from logging. Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown argues why we must act immediately.

Giants is being blitzed for wood-chipping. The Maydena Range will be next. These forests are being cut down with chain-saws and the remnants fire-bombed from the air to prepare for rows of alien and genetically modified replacement trees; and 1080 poison is laid for neighbourhood marsupials which might browse on the seedlings. The fact that these treasures are being destroyed by chain-saws, fire-bombs and poison ought to stir global outrage.

walk in the Styx valley or, better still, to stay overnight, watch the stars twinkle through the lofty forest canopy and listen to the call of the owls and the scurry of the marsupials across the forest floor.

Glimpse the patches of wrecked forest. See the ranges still clothed in green. Imagine what will happen. Return home and show slides (call in the neighbours); descend on your local federal MP; reform the party policy or even change the government. Then there will be a Valley of the Giants National Park for the world to celebrate forever.

Bob Brown

was captivated by Tasmania as soon as he stepped ashore in 1972. He stayed to become a thylacine hunter, GP, politician, and a fighter for Tasmania's and the world's wilderness. Recently, he visited Tibet secretly—only the second parliamentarian to go there without Chinese minders in tow. Tasmania's magnificent wild forests and wilderness remain his recreation, and protecting them is his preoccupation.



IN 1999 THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT legislated to remove national controls from the logging of the world's tallest hardwood forests.

Tasmania's lofty forests are spread like a ribbon up the middle of the island with outliers in the Tarkine wilderness and the north-east highlands. The largest are in the Styx River valley, near Maydena, just an hour-and-a-half drive north-west of Hobart. It is safe to say that not one in a hundred Tasmanians has been to this 'Valley of the Giants', on the eastern edge of the World Heritage wilderness. Hardly one in a million mainlanders knows the area.

In the Styx, a postage-stamp-sized reserve with rotting signs, one tree is recorded as being 93 metres tall. This strong, relatively young specimen is so high that the storms of the last decades have blown away its uppermost branches so that it now measures 91 metres. Across the Styx River, to the north, the side of the Maydena Range is clothed in a vast forest which may well contain even taller examples. Trees above 80 metres are commonplace (the tallest tree in New South Wales measures only 76 metres). Wildlife abounds from the ground to the highest branches.

A logging road passes by the abandoned tall-tree reserve. Other roads snake up the ranges to the south where the Valley of the



But for the non-Green politicians of Tasmania, and the wood-chip corporations, the Valley of the Giants is simply a target. Within a decade or so it will be gutted.

The Wilderness Society is gearing up for a campaign to stop the destruction. One ingredient is essential for success: a nation of people prepared to make the Styx valley their personal priority and take action to evict the chain-saws.

Where to begin? I invite every traveller to Tasmania to put aside a day to drive and

Keeping Kakadu

At risk from uranium-mining, this World Heritage Area can be saved by ordinary Australians preventing the Federal Government and mining company Energy Resources Australia (ERA) from pushing ahead with the proposed Jabiluka uranium-mine. Australian Conservation Foundation President Peter Garrett explains why we must act now.

Peter Garrett

is best known as a humanitarian, the lead singer from Midnight Oil, and the President of the ACF. He's been an environmental activist for more than 20 years. At present Garrett's environmental work focuses on the risks associated with genetically modified food; he's also working to keep Australia safe from international nuclear waste dumping and to preserve Kakadu National Park as a World Heritage site.

KAKADU IS THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST National Park, spanning 200 square kilometres of the Northern Territory. Its dramatic landscapes range from monsoon rainforests to mangrove swamps to flood plains. Many species of reptiles, birds, mammals and fish live there. In addition, Kakadu has some of Australia's best preserved Aboriginal art with about 5000 rock paintings that date back to prehistoric times. The Mirrar people and their culture have been a part of the land for more than 40 000 years.

Kakadu has attained a rare World Heritage listing for its natural and cultural importance. The guiding philosophy behind the list is that places such as Kakadu, the Pyramids and the Grand Canyon are so important to the human spirit that to lose them would diminish humanity. Under international law Australia has accepted the responsibility of preserving and protecting Kakadu for the world community and for future generations.

Kakadu's future is now at risk from uranium-mining. Three groups of the world's leading scientists, environmentalists, architects and archaeologists have testified to the World Heritage Committee that Kakadu should be placed on the 'in danger' World Heritage List immediately in order to prevent the proposed Jabluka uranium-mine.

Of particular concern is the waste from the mine processing which will remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years. Uranium is available only in trace quantities—less than half of one per cent of the ore at the Jabluka mine is uranium oxide. ERA will have to crush millions of tonnes of ore into a fine dust to get the uranium. The experts fear that there is no possibility of guaranteeing the safe storage of 19.5 million tonnes of mine tailings that will be dumped in geologically unstable dams, with the ever-present possibility of radioactive radon gas seeping into the air, land and water of the nearby Magela wetlands. This threatens the survival of the Mirrar people, who have protested against uranium-mining on their land.

In October 1998 a high-powered World Heritage Committee assessment team visited Jabluka. After evaluating submissions from all parties and carefully analysing the Australian Government's 100-plus-page response to the mission's damning report, the team made a unanimous assessment that Kakadu should be listed as 'in danger'. Instead of listening to this assessment, the government spent more than a million dollars cajoling and pressuring members of the World Heritage Committee until the group decided not to put Kakadu on its 'in danger' list.

Why did the government act in this way? Uranium is a dying commodity; economically speaking, it can no longer compete with newer forms of power. The Worldwatch Institute has found that electricity produced by nuclear plants is five times more expensive in dollars a kilowatt than other methods, including wind turbines. The nuclear industry is in decline. Even the World Bank will not fund nuclear power because 'nuclear is not the least cost solution to the power supply problem and environmental risks are high'.

Despite the economic arguments and strong, publicly polled opposition, the government and ERA are pushing ahead. But they're not out of the woods: The government has until 15 April 2000 to answer the World Heritage Committee's 'grave concerns' and 'significant reservations' about the proposed Jabluka uranium-mine. This is well before mining is due to start.

From experience, we know that it takes a lot of both work and persistence to save a

Fraser Island or a Great Barrier Reef against the political 'fashion' of the day; however, we also know that battles such as these can be won.

For more information phone the ACF on (03) 9926 6704 or visit the Web site <http://www.acfonline.org.au>

Rewilding Australia

Imagine animals being able to swim, walk, slither or fly between Australia's wilderness areas, potentially able to cross the continent without ever coming across cleared land or dams on rivers. Can we make this vision a reality? The Wilderness Society's National Campaign Director Alec Marr thinks so.

Alec Marr

has been a prominent campaigner since 1985 on forests, wilderness, World Heritage, Kakadu, the Antarctic, subantarctic areas, and international processes. He enjoys bushwalking, caving, mountaineering, sea kayaking, rafting and landscape photography, and has travelled widely overseas. He once perched in a tree for 16 days while blockading the logging of Tasmania's Farmhouse Creek.



THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN wilderness don't need any convincing that it is one of our most important assets. It is a humbling experience to immerse yourself in a landscape where the raw power of the planet dominates your aspirations.

For urban Australians a serious wilderness trip is really a voyage of discovery. Wilderness is a place of adventure requiring a fit body and a sharp mind. It can also be somewhere to find spiritual renewal. There are dangers and penalties for failing to meet nature's conditions but this instils discipline and the rewards are great.

Conservative estimates indicate that Australia's population will increase by about 53 per cent by 2051; the need to protect and restore our natural heritage has never been greater.

Although wilderness is important for humans, it is even more so for many of the other creatures that share the planet. Numerous plants and animals simply cannot survive outside wilderness areas.

Wilderness may be one of our greatest assets, but it is one of the most abused spaces on earth. Two centuries of European settle-

ment have caused enormous damage to our continent's environment and obliterated whole ecosystems. Many more wilderness areas would have been destroyed without widespread community support for their protection. We have a major task to protect what's left of our wild places; after that, we have an even bigger job for the next century—reversing the damage, or rewilding Australia.

We must accelerate our efforts if we are to save and restore the 5 per cent of the continent still covered in forests or protect the remaining 15 per cent of temperate woodlands. Only if we are successful will we be able to save the 50 per cent of our bird species which some scientists predict we will lose in the next century. The survival of thousands of species of plants and animals depends on our actions within the next few decades.

A critical first step will be to develop a new 'land ethic', with wilderness protection and restoration at its core.

A new report from some of Australia's leading environmental scientists, titled 'The Role of Wilderness in Nature Conservation',

highlights the importance of such a step. The report concludes that 'an integrated landscape conservation strategy will have wilderness areas as the core, complemented with the best of what is left'.

The key to ecosystem- and species survival will be in linking existing wilderness areas through restored corridors of high-quality natural systems—creating a continent-wide network of interconnected wilderness areas protected by non-wilderness buffer zones of natural habitat.

We must also look to the original custodians of the continent for guidance, advice and support. Many of the areas we now cherish as wilderness have been managed by indigenous Australians for many millenniums. It is imperative that Aborigines be intimately involved in decisions regarding the management, protection and rehabilitation of wilderness.

Our aim is to provide places for animals to swim, walk, slither or fly between wilderness areas so that they are potentially able to cross the continent without ever coming across cleared land or dams on rivers. I think that it's a really wild idea! 🐾

The Magic MOUNTAIN

NSW's Koondah Tower eludes all but the hardest walkers;
by Meg McKone. Photos by Ian Hickson

THE KOONDAH TOWER—THE MAGIC mountain! One day it doesn't exist, the next day it does.' This is how David Noble introduced the Koondah Tower in his article, 'New South Wales's Elusive Peaks', in *Wild* no 58. The reason for its magical nature was that it had been left off pre-1970s maps of the Wollemi, NSW, to the confusion of bushwalkers planning trips in the area with maps of different editions; having established its existence I was hoping to discover magic of a different kind.

*'the rest of the party
was obviously up a
creek and not on
top of a ridge where
the map said we
should be'*



A dry sandbank at the junction of Koondah and Ovens Creeks provided a perfect spot for lunch and another cup of tea. How is it that bushwalkers carry so much junk in their packs?

One of the most interesting aspects of bushwalking is planning a good route in an unfamiliar area. (One of the scariest is then to test it, but more of that later.) Noble's article presented a challenge. Of the two peaks in it that I hadn't visited, Mt Mistake seemed best left for the year after a thorough burn-out of the horrendous-sounding scrub, while Koondah Tower seemed a reasonable possibility. On the map it appears as a conical hill overlooking the creek of the same name in the heart of the Wollemi wilderness, not in itself especially significant at a mere 425 metres above sea level, but symbolic of some of the best walking that the Wollemi has to offer.

How to reach it? I rang Ian Hickson, an old bushwalking friend mentioned in the article. No, he hadn't actually climbed it all those years ago, but they'd done another great trip in the general area. So it was back to the maps to search for a point of access. Although the tower appears as a spot height on the Wirraba 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority map, it is in the far north-west corner, and the surrounding CMA 1:25 000 sheets of *Putty*, *Coorongoo* and *Gaspers Mountain* are also required to plan a trip.

The road to the foot of Mt Darcy looked like one possibility for a starting-point from

the west. However, on closer inspection it was too far away for me to do a 'fast' trip with a light pack, and every additional day meant extra weight in rough country. Two years later my husband Frank and I checked out the eastern access and found a road from Putty to Box Tree Clearing—a short, easy walk from Wollemi Creek.

The following Easter (1998) was set aside for the long-dreamed-of trip and now that it was to become a reality, it was time to work out the route. Poring over the maps revealed a number of interesting features in the area with a choice of ridges and creeks as possible routes; but how easy it all appears on the map, and how much slower it is on the ground when creeks are choked with vines and slippery rocks, ridges are cloaked in the scratchiest scrub, and close contours transform into vertical cliffs—magical indeed!

Ian was keen to join the party and, on the close-to-six-hour drive from Canberra to Box Tree Clearing, I discovered that he and I had come to similar conclusions regarding our route. 'Musts' on both our lists included a 'hole' off Ovens Creek and varying parts of Koondah Creek including, of course, the tower itself. Basically, we would walk a clockwise circle of about nine kilometres in dia-

meter, initially heading west and south, then north and east. The main bone of contention was that Ian was keen to explore several kilometres of a northern tributary of Koondah Creek and return by an old road, while I wanted to follow a parallel ridge to drop into an unnamed tributary of Wollemi Creek which Ian thought he had followed on his trip 20 years previously.

The drought had broken during the drive north on Thursday night with a spectacular storm over Sydney, and the weather looked mildly threatening as we set off on the two easy kilometres down a side creek to an old ford built of rock set in concrete that crossed Wollemi Creek. Here we made our first major decision, choosing to walk nine kilometres across country towards Koondah Tower rather than follow Wollemi then Koondah Creeks for 15 kilometres to the same destination. What appeared to be an old logging road conveniently took us several kilometres in the right direction except that it did not follow the exact route shown on the map.

After Doug and Ian had gone to see the view from the top of Gilligans Rock, and the rest of the party was obviously up a creek and not on top of a ridge where the map said we should be, a bout of calling

revealed Doug and Ian to be 50 metres above us. 'Come down here', I called. 'Why?', was the reply. 'Because we're on a road.' 'So are we!' So we scrambled up the slope, found where we were supposed to be, and continued until we left the road altogether to drop into Wirraba Creek, the gorge of which sliced across our route.

Wirraba, a delightful rainforest creek, had flowing water despite its small catchment and my fear that the creeks would be dry due to the drought. Over lunch Ian and I haggled over whether to follow Wirraba Creek down to Koondah Creek and then head up the latter to the tower (12 kilometres of creek walking), or do three kilometres across the tops. The ridge route won, and we found our way up through the cliffs above Wirraba Creek without too much trouble. Descending into Koondah Creek was a different matter altogether; this section of the creek is bordered by broken cliffs close on 200 metres high, and the steepness of the descent looked terrifying.

However, the prospect of a return to Wirraba Creek or a wet 'dry' camp on the tops (it had begun to rain quite heavily) did not appeal, so we headed off down a spur and into a gully, Ian doing a great job of weaving backwards and forwards from cliffline to cliffline, always finding a way through. When we finally reached the bottom it was about 4 pm and we were glad that we hadn't chosen the creek option—the going was so rough that we would surely have been forced to camp several kilometres further downstream. Fortunately, we found a flattish spot nearby and set up a comfortable camp for the first night.

Daybreak on Saturday began with rain, but by the time we set off at 8 am it had eased somewhat. Koondah Creek, like all the creeks in this area, is filled with rainforest and wet sclerophyll eucalypts between its steep, cliffy perimeters, and the creek itself is bedded with slippery, mossy

boulders interspersed with short stretches of sand, some of it quicksand. It was very beautiful but slow going, and we were glad to round a bend one-and-a-half kilometres upstream and sight the magic mountain, Koondah Tower.

Steve, who hadn't been walking for some time before this trip, lit a fire on the sandbank below, declaring that he felt disgustingly dirty and had to shave. We left him promising us a cup of tea on our return, and applied our energy to climbing the tower, which proved easier than expected. Ringed by side creeks, and 180 metres high, it has sheer cliffs on its western side: we found a steep though easy route through the broken cliffs on the east. At one point we caught tantalising glimpses of a magnificent, flat

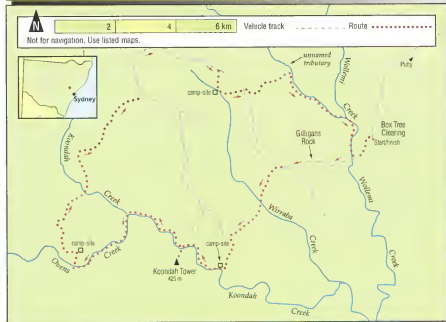
area (a great potential camp-site) beneath rainforest trees on the western side, though there wasn't any time to explore further. The rocky top gave us handy views of the surrounding creeks and cliffines through the trees; then it was time to descend to our first, much-needed cuppa of the day as we hadn't bothered to light a fire in the rain for breakfast.

Two-and-a-half kilometres further upstream we reached Ovens Creek—a perfect spot for lunch and another cup of tea. Ovens Creek proved to be very rough, though Ruth zoomed along over boulders and through pools with seeming ease. A beautiful potential camp-site was bypassed when Ian assumed his 'bull about to charge' expression; he was keen to camp in the 'hole', which he as-



The author at the first camp-site, on the banks of Koondah Creek, a few kilometres downstream from Koondah Tower. Camp-sites are few and far between, but her party found a reasonable spot close to the foot of its route through the cliffs, and was glad to get a fire going to dry off and cook tea.

Koondah Tower area



sured us would be covered in delightful, green grass and bluegums.

'Hole' is a rather unpleasant term for what are actually delightful and unusual features of the Wollemi area. Holes are ancient basalt plugs which have worn away to form almost circular craters; often they are surrounded by sandstone cliffs and joined to the nearest creek by a short, narrow gorge. The natural vegetation tends to reflect the richer soil in its short grass and tall trees, and many holes have been taken advantage of by graziers who have cut down most of the trees to provide enhanced grazing for their cattle. Unfortunately, these holes tend to become degraded and filled with blackberry and other weeds.

However, this hole was a winner, even though we had to carry our water for the night several hundred metres through the connecting gorge. Yes, I did want to camp by the creek so that I could wash the sand out of my clothes; and no, this particular hole didn't sport bluegums. None the less, the combination of a flat, grassy, open camp-site; gum wood to burn instead of rainforest timber, and early Easter eggs with which to stuff ourselves is hard to beat.

The sun was shining on Sunday morning as we climbed out on to the rim of the hole to gaze down on the narrow gorge of Ovens Creek. We followed the rim up a pleasant, open ridge (probably burnt out in the big fires a few years previously) and over a divide back to Koondah Creek by way of another beautiful, rainforest-filled side creek.

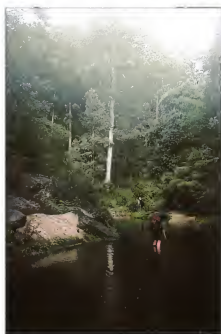
Here we had another decision to make: Ian had been pressing to go six kilometres up a branch of Koondah Creek; I preferred to go four kilometres up a ridge to join the overgrown logging road, then camp in the unnamed tributary of Wollemi Creek. The others were evenly divided between these two options. However, now we had each changed our minds: Ian was for the ridge, saying the map indicated that the creek would be very rough higher up and, anyway, the unnamed tributary I'd had in mind was different from the one he had done

hours later that we emerged bruised and bleeding at the old road. Once again, I thought that the Aborigines had the right idea when they burnt the country regularly.

We now made much better time even though the road was very overgrown in places, yet it was obvious that we wouldn't have time to reach the unnamed tributary that day. Would it mean a dry camp on the road? Fortunately, another hole presented itself just at the right moment; indeed, we could see it through the trees, a grassy crater surrounded by bluegums (*Eucalyptus deanei*, as in the Blue Gum Forest, the Blue

even the leader launched into the approach to the unnamed tributary. When the scrub on the intervening spur proved as vile as that of the previous day, Frank became positively bolshie but by now there was no turning back. The final descent into the creek was steep though without cliffs and, with Doug demolishing the worst of the scrub, we reached the bottom by 10 am.

Now five kilometres of the roughest walking to date lay between our tired bodies and the ford over Wollemi Creek. Perhaps it was our lighter packs; perhaps we had got the hang of it all; perhaps the horses had



Wet from the rain and from crossing Koondah Creek. It was very slow going upstream, over slippery rocks and through wet sclerophyll eucalypts and rainforest, with an occasional spurt of speed on a short stretch of sand.

previously; I was sufficiently weary not to be enthralled by the thought of a 300 metre climb out of the creek.

The ridge route won and we took the most negotiable spur, skirting a considerable cliffline for several hundred metres until it petered out and we were able to climb to the top. The rest of the ridge, however, was nothing like the tops we had encountered earlier in the day. This area had not been burnt in recent years and was full of some of the scratchiest scrub I have ever come across. When it got too bad, Henry took over and it was a good three



Meg McKone

is a keen bushwalker who also enjoys canyoning and the occasional, easy rockclimb. She was the first woman to complete the Three Peaks, NSW, in 1962 (see *Wild* no. 69).

Meg particularly enjoys leading trips of an exploratory nature, and her favourite walking areas include the greater Blue Mountains, and the Macdonnell Ranges, Northern Territory.



Mountains, NSW) near the headwaters of Wirraba Creek and only 80 metres below the ridgetop. It had been cleared in the centre for grazing and we could only imagine what it must have looked like when filled with these magnificent trees, but it still provided a lovely and welcome camp-site as we loped down the hillside in light rain and imminent dusk. It fined up for dinner and the-by now-customary Easter eggs, this time an enormous bag of them provided by Prue, who was still trying to offload the remaining half kilo at breakfast.

Monday morning dawned fine. It was decision time again. The party was looking decidedly ragged around the edges and the temptation to bash seven kilometres along the road and back to the cars by lunch-time was great. But Ian kept us honest. After he had finished telling us what he did to bushwalkers who didn't live up to expectations,

Some of the party on top of the Koondah Tower—the rest were still on the way up. Having reached its goal by mid-morning on the second day, the group had time for plenty of discussion over the most interesting route back.

smelt home, but despite slippery boulders and vines which tripped us up from below and caught round our packs from above, despite fallen logs to be climbed over or crawled under, we made better time down that creek than we'd made following any other. At one point Gusta uncharacteristically lagged behind, then appeared, smiling: 'Just disentangling myself from some vines.' We lunched at 1 pm on a broad sandbank at the Wollemi Creek junction, found another overgrown road down the stretch of creek to the ford, and reached the cars at about 3 pm.

I was grateful to Henry and Alan for carrying the rope, which we hadn't needed to use, and to Ian for keeping us from white-anting and for finding the way through the cliffs. It was a great party and a memorable walk in a seldom visited and truly magical area. I would like to be able to say that it was complete wilderness, but evidence of cattle along the road and the old logging roads themselves show just how elusive such places can be. 🐾

Poles Apart

David Macnab falls for 'a new pair of legs'

I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND IT USEFUL TO TAKE A stout stick with me when I go walking. It provides extra security on steep ground, helps me to keep my balance when crossing a stream, and can be useful in a number of other ways—such as testing the sogginess of a bog, or discouraging menacing stray dogs at camp-sites. So whenever I leave my faithful stick at home, or realise that I have left it in the boot of the car, I invariably start hunting for a temporary replacement for the trip at hand.

Several years ago, however, when I was shopping during a summer walking holiday in the Austrian Alps, my eyes lit on a brightly coloured, extendable aluminium ski pole, which had been specially adapted for walkers. Within minutes I was smitten. My trusty but battered, wooden walking stick simply couldn't compete with the svelte gaudiness of this sleek, new beauty from Germany. I simply had to have it.

The salesman could evidently sense my enthusiasm and immediately tried to sell me two. But that seemed excessive. After all, when you find a new girlfriend you don't immediately think of inviting her sister out as well. You want to acquaint yourself with your new flame without distractions. So I left the shop with only one trekking pole and immediately set off along the nearest walking track with it.

Within minutes I was confident that I had made a singularly successful investment. My new pole had all the advantages of my old stick, and several others besides. I could lengthen it in a matter of seconds for going downhill, or shorten it just as quickly when trudging uphill; and if I did not need it, I could simply collapse it to a compact 64 centimetres and strap it conveniently to my pack.

The pole also made water crossings a cinch: it was brilliant for checking the depth of a stream and for counteracting the force of the water when wading; and it made a perfect extra 'leg' when picking a way across on wobbly stepping-stones. Above all, I was impressed by the way my pole's carbide tip seemed to attach itself to rock—even wet rock—with all the determination of a leech.

It never slipped, with the result that I was able to forget about it and concentrate on where to put my feet.

The following day I decided to try something a little more ambitious: a prominent, snow-covered peak of about 3500 metres—one of the highest in the area. Once again, my pole proved its worth, providing support and security on some dodgy, shale-covered ridges, and as a probe for finding a way through some deep patches of mushy snow at the top. But it was only when I started for home down a treacherously steep, knee-wrecking, 1100

By now, my pole and I were inseparable, and I was heartened to see how many other walkers were similarly equipped. In fact, they were more often *twice* as well equipped as I in that they carried *two* poles. I found this intriguing. Were they all customers of the same shopkeeper who had tried to sell me two poles? Or were they simply fashion victims? After all, why would anyone need two poles when not skiing?

I had been mulling over this for a few days when I saw something that took my breath away. I was clambering up a precipitous couloir when I noticed what looked like a group of wildly overgrown spiders swarming down towards me in a flurry of rapidly moving limbs. They were fellow walkers and each was using two poles with such speed and agility that they really did have the effect (and appearance) of another pair of legs.

I stopped in disbelief as this group was coming down the mountain at least twice as fast as I could have hoped to do. Pausing briefly to chat, they assured me that two poles were indispensable in the mountains, and that they used them just as intensively going uphill. One pole, they said, wasn't even half as good.

This really flustered me: perhaps the shopkeeper who had sold me my first pole hadn't just taken me for a sucker; maybe he knew something I didn't. Returning to his little emporium I immediately noticed that he had put up a new poster behind the display of poles. It showed a grinning Reinhold Messner holding two poles. Clearly I was in good company! But the sight of Messner also stirred a distant memory of the 1978 film of his ground-breaking first ascent of Mt Everest without oxygen.

The film showed how, during their hike to Base Camp, Messner and partner Peter Habeler had literally run rings around their porters, charging up and down slopes to their right and their left, constantly criss crossing the track in an attempt to acclimatise themselves as quickly as possible. And they had done all this using two ski poles. In a split second it all came back to me—and I decided to buy a second pole.

Later that day I stood at the start of another long, uphill track with two trekking poles strapped to my pack: my original one and a twin sister. I was still a little self-conscious about using two poles, but after a few hours of walking steadily uphill I unfashioned them and making sure there were no sceptical observers about, took a few tentative steps.

I don't think anything could have prepared me for the revelation of those few



Left, getting more out of your trekking pole. Gabel's Crosswalk Photo doubles as a 'unipod'. Above, a carbide tip or a rubber cap? There is a range of features to consider when buying trekking poles. Shown here: Jacko Super Trekker (left), Tracks Life Staff, and Trezza SX1 Shock Absorber.

metre slope that I discovered the pole's great value.

I had earlier met up with another solo walker and we had decided to keep each other company. He did not carry a stick of any description and consequently began by descending faster than I, as I was carefully using my pole to absorb my weight with each step. Halfway down, however, I had to start waiting for him as the strain on his knees began to tell. By the time we got to the bottom, I knew I had made a long, arduous descent; but I wasn't hobbling as my friend was. He had to take it easy for the next two days, and a month later he was still complaining about the after-effects of that climb. I am convinced that it was thanks to my trekking pole that I was saved from similar suffering.

paces. I all but leaped ahead as if I had twice as much strength and energy as before. In fact, I had given my arms and upper torso the chance to join in the action, and was thus using whole new sets of muscles to propel me on my way. The strength and energy had always been there but had simply not been utilised.

After a little experimentation I developed a steady rhythm of planting my left pole as I stepped with my right leg, and vice versa. This action is so similar to the way you swing your arms when walking normally that it came quite naturally and soon seemed the only way to tackle an ascent. At one point I tried to put my poles away for a bit and immediately felt distinctly awkward: my arms felt far better taking an active part in the work. From that moment on I never looked back.

I was also delighted at how useful two poles proved to be on steep descents—all the benefits of one pole magnified several times over. And after using them for a week, I was surprised at how agile I had become, and at

how much faster I was moving over tricky ground. I doubt that I'll ever reach the dexterity of those spider-like experts who used their poles to bound down the mountains, but they are fixed in my mind as glowing examples of what can be achieved.

The next big test came when I returned to Australia where trekking poles are still a novelty, especially among bushwalkers. 'Lost your skis, mate?' 'Didn't someone tell you it's summer? There's no snow here, mate!' and so on are standard comments, whether I'm using two poles or one. More's the pity, I say, because these jokers really haven't any idea of what they're missing.

The scientific evidence is beyond dispute. During a long day's walk we subject our leg ligaments and joints to enormous pressure, especially the knees. With a moderately heavy pack this pressure increases dramatically, and if you're taking big steps down steep terrain it rises even more. This is where a stick is so useful. Tests have shown that for an average-sized man weighing about 75 kilograms, a walking stick can reduce the

strain absorbed by his legs by 5–8 kilograms, transferring this through the arms and distributing it among the joints and muscles of the upper body. Unfortunately, this lightening of the load occurs only with every second step, because no one using a single stick plants it with every step as part of a normal stride. For some people this may even be worse than not using a stick at all: it can lead to one leg being favoured over the other, which may result in an imbalance in posture giving rise to fatigue and even pain in the lower back muscles as well as the working arm.

On the other hand, two sticks, or poles, reduce the pressure with every step, distributing the benefits evenly. And even a rough

Trekking poles, by Stephen Curtain

Below is a selection of lightweight aluminium trekking poles available in specialist outdoors shops. We have selected only one model from each brand represented. All weights and prices are for a single pole except in the case of the Trezeta SX1 Shock Absorber; this pole is only available as half of a pair and is priced accordingly.

	Weight, grams	Minimum length, centimetres	Shock absorbers	Carbide tip	Features	Availability	Approx. price, \$
Black Diamond							
Ascent	350	60–150	Yes	Yes	Moulded rubber hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap	Paddy Pallin shops (see Directories)	85
Gabel							
Crosswalk Photo	265	67–148	No	Yes	The pole can be used as a 'unipod': remove the wooden hand-grip and screw an SLR camera on to the shaft. Has a wrist-strap	Macdon Trading Company, phone (03) 9489 9766	77
Jacko							
Super Trekker	350	76–145	Yes	Yes	Soft plastic hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap, interchangeable basket system	Anso, phone (03) 9471 1500	70
Leki Australia							
Super Makalu Cor-Tec Antishock (positive angle)	310	83–140	Yes	Yes	Angled, moulded cork/rubber hand-grip; removable basket; adjustment wheel on the handle for locking the wrist-strap or selecting the automatic safety function (lengthens the wrist-strap when an upward force is applied)	Marvelox Australia PO Box 1641 Chatswood NSW 2057	110
Life Link							
Variant 3 Cork	300	64–140	No	Yes	Moulded cork hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap, interchangeable basket system	Interrek, phone (02) 4572 0374	98
Salewa							
Super Teleskop	300	68–140	No	Yes	Moulded rubber hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap, removable basket	Interrek, phone (02) 4572 0374	65
Simond							
Mountain Goat Antishock	330	65–140	Yes	Yes	Moulded rubber hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap, removable basket	Mountain Designs shops (see Directories)	109
Tracks							
Lite Staff	280–310	Fixed	No	No	Available in four fixed lengths: 110, 122, 132 and 142 centimetres. Foam hand-grip capped with a wooden knob. Has a wrist-strap. Rubber cap at foot	Grant Minervini Agencies, phone (08) 8346 6061	60
Trezeta							
SX1 Shock Absorber	320	65–110	Yes	Yes	Moulded rubber hand-grip, adjustable wrist-strap, removable basket	Mountain Designs shops (see Directories)	135

David Macnab

has lived in Africa, North America, Europe and Australia. An avid skier, bushwalker and mountaineer, he combines his love of wild places with a passion for photography.



calculation will show how dramatic this can be. Assume that you're spared 5 kilograms with every step and take about 1000 paces a kilometre: you will be saving your joints some 5000 kilograms of pressure every kilometre. That's 50 tonnes over a 10 kilometre walk—even on the flat.

And this considers only the vertical pressure on your legs. On uneven ground there are also tremendous lateral and torsional pressures on your leg joints and ligaments, which have to work ever harder as the terrain becomes rougher simply to keep you upright. Add a heavy pack to the equation and it's amazing how easily the tiniest mistake can translate into a wrenched knee or ankle.

Once again, a pair of poles is the obvious solution. Operating exactly like a second pair of legs, they allow you to steady yourself so that you can take easy, comfortable steps without twisting your joints, wobbling or overbalancing. In really tough situations they also enable you to place your feet in the most awkward places with a minimum of strain. Little wonder that so many walkers in Europe carry two poles, while seasoned alpinists like Messner are not to be seen without them.

The only problem a pair of poles can't really solve is that of the wisecracking ignoramus. But then, who cares when you know you'll be enjoying the mountains and the bush long after that person's joints have crumbled! ☺

Nature's art

Colours of wild Tasmania, by Grant Dixon



The south-east coast of Cape Barren Island, Bass Strait, is sweeping and spectacular, but it also hides some smaller-scale scenic gems. Here, the tannin-stained waters of a lagoon provide a last repository for a tide-plucked shrub and a mirror for the clouds.



Late April is when many Tasmanian walkers head for the mountains with their cameras, hoping to capture the Fagus on film. The tone and consistency of autumn colour varies from year to year, presumably due to climatic factors. The red phase is uncommon, generally restricted to isolated bushes or even individual branches.

Grant Dixon works part time for the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and has spent much of his free time exploring and photographing remote parts of the world. However, he is always drawn home to the wild, natural landscapes of South-west Tasmania.





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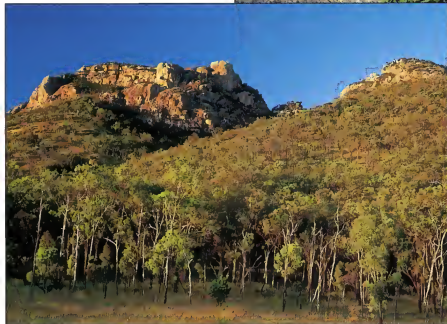
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South-east Queensland's *best kept* bushwalking secret

Peter Sykes samples Mt Walsh National Park's extraordinary ruggedness and variety

WITH CONSTANTLY INCREASING NUMBERS of visitors, Mt Walsh National Park is fast losing its reputation as south-east Queensland's best kept bushwalking secret. Recent interest in the area from walkers has given new life to a proposal to double the size of the park to almost 10 000 hectares. Community initiatives are already under way to take advantage of the fact that the environment and the economy now often go hand in hand.

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) literature describes Mt Walsh as an ecological wonderland featuring granite outcrops that are both 'rugged' and 'spectacular'. Surrounding lowlands are so incon-



spicuous that the ranges and gorges overlooking the nearby township of Biggenden leave an indelible impression. Hidden away in a remote corner of the 5240 hectare park is Palm Valley—an exquisite, rainforested creek dominated by towering bangalore palms. This provides a stark

The rocky Mt Walsh National Park dominates the landscape near the town of Biggenden. Eucalypt forest and heath cover the summit and slopes, while palms and vine forest can be found in the cooler, wetter corners of the park.



Looking out over surrounding farmlands from an exposed area of rock known as the Bluff. The Mt Walsh area has many such spectacular views. Both photos Robert Ashdown

contrast to the wild-flower displays in the open woodlands and heaths on the park's upper reaches, which rise to an often underestimated 700 metres above sea level.

Walkers are regularly delighted by wildlife: some dingoes of unmixed origin, numerous species of wallabies, grey kangaroos and an outstanding array of raptors. On the summit of Mt Walsh shade is often provided by an overhead wedge-tailed eagle on a sunny day. A glimpse of rare and threatened species such as the powerful

owl, peregrine falcon and grey goshawk is possible.

The park straddles the boundary between the South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow South bioregions which helps to explain the area's remarkable ecological diversity. In nominating the adjoining Coongara State Forest for inclusion in the National Park, botanist P I Forster noted: 'Few large areas of these plant communities now exist in south-eastern Queensland, and as such the area is important, particularly as it supports a diversity of community types.'

For the average bushwalker, this quite simply means that there is a lot to see and do.

Historically the range was the starting-point for one of the greatest annual bushwalking parties held in Australia. Indigenous peoples of the Waka Waka, Gubbi Gubbi, Badtjala and Gureng Gureng groups would congregate and celebrate at Mt Walsh before undertaking the 200 kilometre walk southwards along range tops to the Bunya Mountains, also in Queensland, for the bunya nut festival. The overnight walk described here falls considerably short of this distance, but the basic characteristics are the same.

Park ranger Peter Tierney says that many visitors underestimate Mt Walsh's rugged terrain and problems occur when walkers are not properly prepared for its lack of reliable water. Even though the following walk was planned with this in mind, there is no substitute for fitness and experience when tackling its many challenges.

When to go

Spring and autumn are the best times, but summer is OK and allows plenty of daylight hours for navigation. At most times an early

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Hard
Length	Two days
Type	Rocky mountain terrain and some creek rock-hopping
Region	South-east Queensland
Best times	The dry periods in spring or autumn
Special points	Carry adequate quantities of water and avoid confusion over place names

start is necessary on both days to avoid peak heat while doing the major vertical ascents. Spectacular wild-flower displays are a feature in spring. Winter allows little time for the long and navigationally challenging day two.

Warnings

Ensure that water supplies are adequate. Unofficial place names can often confuse walkers. Local residents and QPWS literature, for example, refer to a cliff on the eastern side of Mt Walsh as 'the Bluff'. The official name for the higher peak on the

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park's western side, however, is 'the Bluff Mountain', which is additionally confusing because it is marked in different places on the two suggested maps. Carry, and know how to use, a rope for safety purposes.

Maps

It is recommended that walkers obtain the *Biggenden* 1:100 000 Sunmap and the complementary 1:50 000 A3 bushwalking map—both available from the Department of Natural Resources, PO Box 212, Maryborough, QLD 4650; telephone (07) 4121 1730.

Access

A council picnic/camping area is at the base of Mt Walsh about three-and-a-quarter hours' drive north of Brisbane. Take the Bruce Highway to 12 kilometres north of Gympie, then turn left on to the Wide Bay Highway. Take the signposted right turn to Woolooga and follow the signs to Biggenden. About two kilometres before Biggenden look for the sign marking the National Park access road on your left.

Camping

Camping is allowed at the aforementioned picnic area. Water and toilet facilities are available. Occasionally there is private camping on a property accessible from the road to the National Park. A host farm on the western side of the park offers bush camping at QPWS rates. Permits and info sheets for wilderness camping inside the park can be obtained from the QPWS, PO Box 101, Maryborough, QLD 4650; phone (07) 4121 1800. Biggenden Shire Council can be phoned on (07) 4127 1177.

Day one

Regarding distance, this is the shorter of the two days, but includes some exposed rock scrambling and difficult navigation. The climb to the summit takes about two to three hours. Start early in summer to avoid the midday heat. At the picnic area take note of an unofficial walking track (used here as a return route) that heads south directly to the summit of Mt Walsh. Move away from this track and ascend the south-west ridge to the base of the rocky outcrops on the northern end of the range. An exposed rock scramble leads directly to Little Pinnacle—the first of three minor summits. A more protected route to the top can be found by contouring west and following a rocky gully to the top.

Your first view of Frog Rock—a rock formation bearing a remarkable similarity to Freddo—is from the top of Little Pinnacle. Descend into a saddle on the southern end of the pinnacle, then contour left into the second saddle staying close to the rocky outcrops. Experienced rockclimbers often choose to go over the second pinnacle. From the second saddle, contour left again and hug the cliffline until you reach the

third saddle. The main peak of Mt Walsh is climbed from here.

From the last saddle go to the right of the rocky ridge for about 12 minutes, passing a gully that looks promising and instead proceeding to a cliffline skirting the next gully. The ascent to the summit does not pose major difficulties, but has one short section requiring rock-scrambling ability. Note where you reached the summit. If all has gone well, there should be plenty of time to explore the top of Mt Walsh.

Return to where you reached the summit and head south for a short distance, keeping an eye out for a westerly ridge into Stony Gorge that looks relatively clear. The vegetation on these ridges actually changes from year to year and from season to season, so there is no sure way to avoid scratchy vegetation. Once at the creek, follow it downstream until you reach a deep

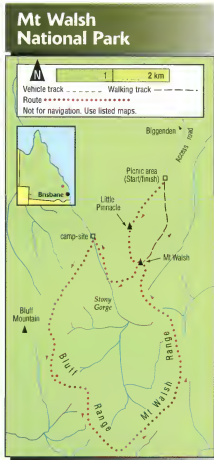
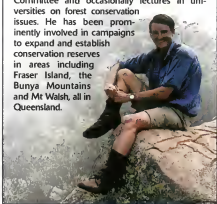
trouble, a quick loop round the northern end of the Mt Walsh Range will get you back to the picnic area.

Day two

Again, an early start is necessary as this is a long and navigationally challenging day. From the suggested camping area, ascend an obvious ridge to the south-west. According to the 1:50 000 A3 bushwalking map, the ridge takes you to the Bluff Range and

Peter Sykes

is the chairperson of the Wide Bay-Burnett Parks Committee and occasionally lectures in universities on forest conservation issues. He has been prominently involved in campaigns to expand and establish conservation reserves in areas including Fraser Island, the Bunya Mountains and Mt Walsh, all in Queensland.



swimming pool, and stock up on water supplies. There should be ample time for a cool swim.

Much is made of the lack of water in the park, but even in the worst drought periods I have always found at least a trickle of water in Stony Creek. The creek runs intermittently and it is doubtful that the swimming-pool would ever empty. At the time of writing, Queensland is enjoying a wet cycle that should ensure Stony Creek looking healthy for a few years to come. Continue downstream for about a kilometre from the swimming-pool. There are some good camping spots on the creek near the northern boundary of the park (GR 038715). If in

a complex of minor and undistinguished peaks—one of which is marked by a cairn. Here, the issue of confusing unofficial place names comes into play. The two suggested maps disagree on the exact location of Bluff Mountain, but the rocky peak about 300 metres to the west of where walkers reach the top of the range is certainly the outstanding feature. Confident and fit navigators may have time to climb this peak before weaving their way back along the ranges to Mt Walsh; however, it is best to skip visiting the Bluff Mountain summit if time is limited and navigation has proven difficult.

As there are about eight kilometres of walking from the top of the Bluff Range back to the Mt Walsh summit, a safer plan for a first visit is carefully to negotiate your way along the top of the Bluff Range southward to its junction with the Mt Walsh Range (about GR 045680). This point is a long way from reliable water and the most dangerous part of the walk. From here, the clearest and flattest north-easterly ridge will get you straight on to the Mt Walsh Range; glimpses of the Coast Range to the south-east should help with navigational bearings.

Using the 1:50 000 A3 map, keep to the top of the Mt Walsh Range all the way back to the summit. There is an occasionally used camping area on this stretch of the walk, but water is not readily available. From the Mt Walsh summit, a cairn on its south-eastern edge indicates the unofficial track (marked with paint and tape), which will return you to the picnic area in less than an hour. There are often day-trippers on the summit who can help you to find this track if there are any difficulties. ☼



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Northern *solitude*

Monica Chapman explores the heathlands and beaches of Victoria's northern Wilsons Promontory





It's easy to guess why this serene sweep of sand is called Five Mile Beach. To extend your walk in the northern Prom by one day, take the 16 kilometre return trip to the southern end of the beach. In good weather there are outstanding views of the Latrobe Range.
Paul Sindair

ONE OF VICTORIA'S MOST INTERESTING AND POPULAR sections of coastline surrounds the Wilsons Promontory National Park. About 30 000 hectares were set aside for this park in 1905, and subsequent additions have increased the size to almost 49 000 hectares. The coastal and inlet waters surrounding the Prom are also protected in marine parks and reserves. Wilsons Promontory has sustained activities such as grazing, logging, mining and even guerrilla warfare training. It has also suffered massive bushfires. But despite its turbulent past, the Prom remains a coveted location for many bushwalkers.

Most walkers who have visited the Prom will know the southern area quite well with the granite peaks of Mts Oberon and Wilson dominating the scene, and the sandy beach along Oberon Bay. Many are also familiar with the sheltered Refuge and Sealers Coves.

The northern half of Wilsons Promontory is not as mountainous as the southern part; however, it features heathlands, endless sandy beaches and swampy plains. These provide enjoyable and adventurous walking for bushwalkers at every level of experience.

When to go

Wilsons Promontory is suitable for walking at any time of the year. In summer water can be scarce, so make sure that you check with the ranger when applying for your permit. Parks Victoria also recommends boiling or chemically sterilising all drinking water. Autumn has the advantage of cooler weather, while in spring the wild flowers are abundant and water is not so difficult to find.

Safety

Obtain up-to-date information on track conditions and water-supplies from the ranger before attempting the walk. The ranger will also advise whether any management burns are likely before your trip.

An out-of-control management fire burnt out much of the area to the north of Five Mile Road in May. It is claimed that these fires are necessary to preserve the heathland habitat that is the home of a large variety of wildlife.

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Easy to medium
Length	Two or three days
Type	Heathlands, forested gullies, coastal campsite
Region	Wilsons Promontory, Victoria
Best times	Spring and autumn
Special points	

Use fuel stoves only; water is limited in summer; purify drinking water; don't use soap/detergent near watercourses and carry out all your rubbish. Take wet-weather gear.

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Map

Wilsons Promontory National Park 1:50 000
Vicmap (Outdoor Leisure Series).

Further reading

There is a variety of publications on Wilsons Promontory; but very little information specifically about the northern half. Parks Victoria's *Park Notes* provide brief details of day- and overnight walks in the area. *Wilsons Promontory* by Geoff Westcott (University of NSW Press, 1995) and the back of the map also have some very brief track notes.

Permits

You must book your permit in advance for all overnight walks; phone 1800 350 552. The info sent with your permit explains where to deliver your permit on your return. Read the regulations before commencing the walk. At present the car entry fee is \$8.00 a vehicle plus \$4.20 a person a night to camp.

Access

From Melbourne it's a 241 kilometre drive south-east to Wilsons Promontory. From the park entrance drive 10.2 kilometres to the signpost stating 'Tidal River 20 kilometres'. Some 800 metres further along turn left on to a gravel road known as Five Mile Road. Follow this for almost three kilometres to the car park. On National Park brochures this is called Five Mile Road Car Park while on the Vicmap it's called Millers Landing Car Park. The car park is quite large and has an information board.

The walk

This walk is primarily along gravel four-wheel-drive tracks that head east across the northern part of Wilsons Promontory. The heathland track passes through forest and undulating, ending at Five Mile Beach. There are good views over the heathlands to the north and, upon nearing the beach, good views south to the higher ranges as well. Return along the same track. The walk can be undertaken in two fairly solid days. Alternatively, you can incorporate an additional day exploring Five Mile Beach and make it a more leisurely three-day trip.

Day one

On the first day the walk heads east from Five Mile Road Car Park to the camping area at Five Mile Beach. For a party of average fitness the 19 kilometre walk takes between five and seven hours.

Follow Five Mile Road from the car park, staying right at the junction with Millers Landing Track about 200 metres from the

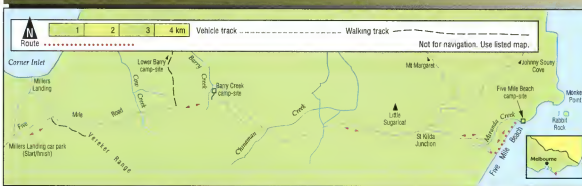
car park. The gravel road climbs steadily over the lower slopes of the north-west ridge of the Vereker Range for about 1.8 kilometres. Pass the walking track to Vereker Lookout on the right. About 30 metres further on the road meets the Link Track to Millers Landing. There are good views to the north and north-west in this area. Banksia, acacia and grass-trees dominate.

Continue along the road that sides close to the base of the Vereker Range with views to the north, then descend to Cow Creek, which is often dry. Climb steeply up the track on the other side of the creek which flattens out before negotiating a final, steep pinch to the top of the spur. As you begin to descend, pass the track junction to Lower Barry camp-site. After a gentle descent you reach a bridge over Barry Creek. You will usually find water here. This is four kilometres from the start. About 50 metres

A walking track heads east, descending to a creek that runs behind the main dunes. Cross the creek on a small log bridge before climbing up and down the final dunes and moving on to the beach. A post marks this junction.

Five Mile Beach has great views of the Latrobe Range to the south. Head north for just over one kilometre on the soft, sandy beach to where Miranda Creek flows into the ocean. About 100 metres inland from the mouth of the creek, on the southern bank, is the Five Mile Beach camping area. From the edge of the camping area you can look out across the lagoon. Many suitable camp-sites are among the tea-tree. Water can be obtained from the small creek on the north side of the lagoon almost directly opposite the camping area. Depending on tides, you must either wade across the lagoon or rock hop across the creek. The water

Northern Wilsons Promontory



past the bridge is the signpost on the left to Barry Creek camping area, a small clearing in the banksia next to the creek, and 100 metres north along a walking track.

Turning south-west, the road skirts the headwaters of a minor tributary of Barry Creek before swinging north-east and winding its way down to Chinaman Creek. The descent is through tall, dense forest. This is a good spot to stop for lunch (but don't expect to find a picnic table as shown on the map) especially on a warm day. However, the creek catchment is much less than that of Barry Creek. As a result, Chinaman Creek is an unreliable source of water all year.

The forest becomes more open past Chinaman Creek. There are views to the north-east across swampland as the road winds in and out of the smaller spurs. The track then heads along the northern side of a low ridge towards St Kilda Junction. The last three kilometres to the junction overlook the vast heathlands surrounding Chinaman Creek to the north with views over Corner Inlet.

Take the right track from St Kilda Junction. It descends steeply at first, then levels out with views of the northern ranges and the ocean. From the junction it's just over two kilometres to Five Mile Beach. Follow the gravel track, crossing Miranda Creek on a causeway. The track becomes sandy as you near the coastal dunes and it ends in a loop.

from Miranda Creek is salty. This small creek may be dry in summer, so check with the ranger when booking your permit.

Day two (optional)

Take it easy with a leisurely stroll towards the southern end of Five Mile Beach (16 kilometres return). Carry what you would normally take on any day walk; especially remember the water and sunscreen. Many interesting shells are on the beach and you will have fine views in good weather.

Day three

The return to the car park is along the same track. After packing up camp and ensuring that no rubbish has been left, meander back along the beach to the post marking the junction. Turning west (right), follow the track back over the dunes to cross the small creek. Head up to join the vehicle track and turn right to follow it back up to St Kilda Junction. Turn west (left) at the junction and return along Five Mile Road. Barry Creek camping area would be a good spot to stop for lunch on the way back to the car park and the end of the walk. ☺

Monica Chapman really enjoys the contrast of bushwalking and ski-touring adventures to city life. She appreciates the beauty and harshness of our more remote wild areas and particularly enjoys visiting the rugged coastlines and sculptured ridges of South-west Tasmania.



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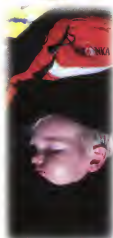
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Gear for places you'd rather be...

DOWN SLEEPING-BAGS

Michael Hampton snuggles down to weigh 'em up



This chilly camper would surely have preferred to be in a cosy down sleeping-bag instead! Michael Hampton

A SLEEPING-BAG IS POSSIBLY THE MOST useful piece of equipment any outdoors enthusiast will own. From bivvying under the stars on a remote mountain top to sleeping over at grandma's, your faithful 'fart sack' should ensure that you are snug through years of adventures. The down bags covered in this survey are a selection of popular models considered suitable for bushwalking in Australia. Not included in this survey are products from Salewa and Fairydawn.

Tapered rectangular bags can be unzipped and used like a doona, giving them year-round versatility. When open, two bags can be laid one on top of the other and zipped together (known as 'mating'). Most rectangular models have twin zip-slides or a second zip at the foot to allow

you to open another part of the bag for ventilation.

Mummy bags are designed to follow the contours of the body. Although less versatile seasonally, their advantages are two-fold. First, due to their efficient shape, less down is required to achieve the desired

Buy right

- Are you a warm or cold sleeper? A classic example of a cold sleeper is the *petite* female with little body fat. Decide on your primary outdoors activity. If you are a cold sleeper consider buying one grade up or opt for a mummy-shaped bag.
- Remember that you can always wear more clothing when it is cold. The addition of an inner-sheet and a bivvy-bag will increase the warmth of your bed. Use a good-quality closed- and/or open-cell mat to insulate yourself from the ground.
- Try on sleeping-bags in the shop as you would expensive boots or clothing. Often your final choice may come down to how a particular bag 'feels'. Play with the zips—do they snag? Do the draught collar

and hood close snugly around your head with the opening near your mouth and nose? Avoid bags that are too short or extremely tight, especially around the shoulders. Bags designed for women are common these days. Also, most manufacturers offer extra long/wide versions of their most popular bags. As for blokes, if you are ever in doubt as to the adequate length or width of a bag, particularly with mummies, choose extra long/large.

- Check whether there is a side-block baffle at the non-zip side of the bag. Such a baffle keeps the top and bottom fills separate, but it can prevent you from shaking the down to one side on a warm night.

Best suited for

This column indicates the manufacturer's primary intended use for each bag. The cut of the bag, the amount of down fill, and other features will affect a bag's grading. *Three-season* bags are designed to be used in summer, spring and autumn. *Four-season* models can be used at low levels in winter. *Snow-rated* bags handle all four seasons and above the snowline. This column is only a guide.

Shape

Two shapes of bag are examined: tapered (or semi) rectangular and mummy.

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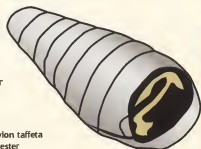
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ULTRALITE

The Ultralite is the compact, light, synthetic sleeping-bag on the market. It uses Du Pont's Thermolite Micro fibres, and is targeted at the bushwalker, mountain marathon competitor, cyclist or traveller who requires a product that is lightweight and compact.



Fabric:

Outer 40D 240T Ripstop nylon taffeta
Inner Soft-hand Micro polyester

Ultralite model	700	900	1100	1300
Total weight (kg):	0.90	1.10	1.40	1.55
Fill weight (gm/m ²):	1 x 100	2 x 100 top 1 x 100 bottom	2 x 150 top 1 x 100 bottom	2 x 175 top 1 x 150 bottom
Temp rating (°C):	0	-5	-10	-12
Comfort rating:	+25 to +5	+25 to 0	+15 to -5	+25 to -8
Length (cm):	225	225	225	225
Chest width (cm):	80	80	80	80
Foot width (cm):	50	50	50	50
Pack size (cm) L x diam:	22 x 14	27 x 16	28 x 16	29 x 18

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Down sleeping-bags

	Best suited for	Shape	Weight: full (local), grams	Down	Loft rating: cubic inches/ounce	Outer fabric	Internal construction	Zip-slide: side, foot	Draught tube: neck, wrist	Sizes available	Comments	Survivor's choice	Approx. price, \$	
Adventure Designs New Zealand														
	Oiga f	3 season	tr	500 (1100)	Duck	550	Pertex	Box wall, back stitching	Twin, single	3D, none	Standard, XL	●●	280	
	Bungle f	3-4 season	tr	770 (1350)	Duck	550	Pertex	As above	As above	As above	As above	●●	300	
Great Outdoors China														
	Bengal f	2-3 season	tr	500 (1500)	Duck	650	Tactel	Box wall	Both twin	3D, 3D	Standard	Compressible stuff sack	na	200
	Wolvenne f	3-4 season	tr	700 (1600)	Duck	650	Tactel	As above	As above	As above	Standard	As above	na	250
Kathmandu China														
	Navigator Plus	4 season	tr	850 (1750)	Goose	550	Taffeta	Vertical chest-baffles, V-shaped lower-baffles	Both twin	3D, 3D	Standard, XL	Semi box foot	●●	540
	Wedgetail	3 season	tr	450 (1450)	Goose	700	DryLoft upper, Ripstop base	Vertical chest-baffles, horizontal lower-baffles, sleeping-mat sleeve	3/4-length twin, none	As above	As above	Base sleeve designed to resist moisture and protect down. Lightweight. Wrigglers should use a slippery inner-sheet	●●	540
	Moonraker	4 season	m	760 (1550)	Goose	700	DryLoft	Vertical chest-baffles, V-shaped lower-baffles	Twin, none	As above	As above		●● 1/2	640
Macpac New Zealand														
	Pinnacle	2-3 season	tr	250 (700)	Goose	650	HiLight	Box wall, radial chest-baffles, sleeping-mat sleeve	1/2-length single, none	None	Standard, XL	Lightweight. Wrigglers should use a slippery inner-sheet	●●	350
	Meridian #	3-4 season	tr	700 (1300)	Duck	560	Taffeta	Box wall	Twin, single	Double 3D, 2D	As above	HiLight version available	●●●●	450
	Sapphire	4 season	m	900 (1500)	Goose	650	HiLight	Box wall, radial chest-baffles, differential cut	Twin, none	Double 3D, 3D	Standard	Down foot-muff traps warm air around feet. Expedition version available	●●●	700
Mont Fitz/Australia														
	Nadgee #	3 season	tr	550 (1180)	Goose	600	Taffeta, DryLoft foot	Box wall	Twin, single	3D, 2D	Standard, XL	Full DryLoft version available	●● 1/2	400
	Brindabella #	4 season	tr	700 (1340)	Goose	600	As above	Box wall	As above	As above	As above	As above	●● 1/2	470
	Telemark 850 #	4 season/ snow	m	850 (1580)	Goose	650	DryLoft	Box wall, differential cut	As above	Double 3D, 2D	As above	Available in taffeta with DryLoft foot	●●● 1/2	540
Mountain Designs Australia														
	Travette 650 #	3 season	tr	650 (1200)	Duck	550	SilTex	Box wall, back stitching	Twin, single	2D, none	Standard, XL	Available in 3 Ml weights	●●●	300
	Standhardt #	4 season	m	800 (1450)	Duck	550	SilTex upper, DryLoft foot	As above	As above	3D (double 3D at foot)	Standard	Full DryLoft version available. Option of a removable neck-muff	●●●●	350
	Comice	4 season/ snow	m	700 (1600)	Duck/ goose	650	DryLoft	Vertical chest-baffles, horizontal lower-baffles, differential cut	As above	Double 3D, 3D	Standard	DryLoft inside hood	●●●●	550
Mountain Hardwear China														
	Talic	3 season	m	650 (1300)	Goose	600	Taffeta	Slant box-wall	Twin, none	3D, none	Standard	Optional water-resistant/windproof StormLight shell	●●	400
	Tenaya	3 season	tr	700 (1400)	Goose	600	Taffeta	As above	Both single	3D, 2D	Standard	As above	●● 1/2	400
	Tioga	4 season/ snow	m	800 (1500)	Goose	600	Taffeta	As above	Twin, none	As above	Standard	As above	●●	430
● average ●● good ●●● very good ●●●● excellent Shape: tr tapered rectangular; mummy Outer fabric: DryLoft, HiLight, Pertex Endurance, StormLight water-resistant, breathable nylon; Pertex, Ripstop, SilTex, Tactel, Taffeta types of nylon Internal construction: see illustration text for explanation of terms Zip-slide: Twin slides enable you to open or close a single zip in two directions at the same time Draught tube: 2D two-dimensional, 3D three-dimensional Sizes available: XL extra large/long; XW extra wide na not assessed # women's version available † not seen by author ‡ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made														

● average ●● good ●●● very good ●●●● excellent **Shape:** tr tapered rectangular; mummy **Outer fabric:** DryLoft, HiLight, Pertex Endurance, StormLight water-resistant, breathable nylon; Pertex, Ripstop, SilTex, Tactel, Taffeta types of nylon **Internal construction:** see illustration text for explanation of terms **Zip-slide:** Twin slides enable you to open or close a single zip in two directions at the same time **Draught tube:** 2D two-dimensional, 3D three-dimensional **Sizes available:** XL extra large/long; XW extra wide **na** not assessed **#** women's version available
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A roomy semi-rectangular shape for the bushwalker, trumper or camper with the added security of a DryLoft outer shell. They are popular because they offer so much of the efficiency of a Mummy bag but with more room and versatility. High lofting down, V-baffle control and superior fabrics mean you will sleep warm and comfortable in all but expedition conditions. Snug-as-a-you-know-what in fact.

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Down sleeping-bags continued

	Box suited for	Shape	Weight, fill total, grams	Down	Loft rating, cubic inches/ounce	Outer fabric	Internal construction	Zip-slide, side, foot	Draught tube, neck muff	Sizes available	Comments	Survivor's choice	Approx. price, \$
One Planet New Zealand													
	Bushlite Super	4 season	tr 850 (11550)	Goose	650	Pertex, DryLoft foot	Box wall, V-shaped baffles	Twin, none	3D, 3D	Standard, XL, XW	Waterproof stuff sack	★★★★	\$20
	Bushlite	3-4 season	tr 700 (14500)	Goose	650	DryLoft	As above	As above	As above	As above	As above	★★★	600
	Dandelion	4 season/snow	m 700 (15000)	Goose	650	DryLoft	Box wall, vertical chest-baffles, horizontal lower-baffles	As above	As above	Standard, XL	As above	★★★	680
Paddy Pallin Australia													
	Cloudmaker #	3 season	tr 750 (14000)	Duck, goose	570	Pertex	Box wall	Twin, single	3D, none	Standard, XL	DryLoft version available	★★	370
	Ossa	4 season	tr 650 (13500)	Goose	660	DryLoft	Box wall	As above	As above	Standard	Oval foot-section	★★★★	540
	Freeling #	4 season/snow	m 700 (13700)	Goose	660	DryLoft	Box wall	Twin, none	3D, 3D	Standard, XL		★★	600
Puradown Australia													
	Alpine f	3 season	tr 800 (14000)	Duck	540	Taffeta	Box wall	Both, single	2D, 2D	Standard	Different-sized bags made to order. Compressible stuff sack	★★	340
	Mawson f	3 season	tr 750 (13500)	Duck	540	Pertex	Slant box-wall	Twin, single	As above	Standard	Available in 4 fill weights. Different-sized bags made to order. Compressible stuff sack	★★★	370
Roman Australia													
	Everest Cap 1	3 season	tr 550 (12000)	Duck	620	Pertex	Box wall	Both, single	3D, 2D	Standard, XL, XW	Compressible stuff sack	★★★	280
Snowgum Australia													
	Vesper 700	3 season	tr 700 (14000)	Duck	600	Taffeta	Box wall, tuck baffles	Twin, single	2D, over-filled baffle	Standard, XL	Box foot	★★★	330
	Vesper 850	4 season	tr 850 (16000)	Duck	600	Taffeta	As above	As above	As above	Standard	As above	★★★	380
Summit Australia													
	Savanna 750 f	2-3 season	tr 750 (13000)	Duck	600	Pertex Ripstop	Box wall, tuck stitching	Twin, single	2D, none	Standard, XL	Available in 3 fill weights	★★★	330
	Tundra 700 f	3 season	tr 700 (13000)	Duck	600	Pertex Ripstop, Pertex Endurance	As above	As above	3D, 2D	As above	Available in 2 fill weights	★★	430
	Tundra 900 f	4 season	tr 900 (15000)	Duck	600	As above	As above	Both twin	As above	As above	Heavy-duty, compressible stuff sack	★★	470

● average ●● good ●●● very good ●●●● excellent
 nylon; Pertex, Ripstop, Siltex, Tactel, Taffeta types of nylon
 † not seen by author ‡ not seen by referee

Shape: tr tapered rectangular; mummy Outer fabric: DryLoft, HiLight, Pertex Endurance, StormLight water-resistant, breathable
 Internal construction: see illustration text for explanation of terms Zip-slide: Twin slides enable you to open or close a single zip in
 two directions at the same time Draught tube: 2D two-dimensional, 3D three-dimensional Sizes available: XL extra large/long XW extra wide na not assessed # women's version available

season rating: this minimises weight and bulk. On the other hand, the mummy is the preferred bag when warmth is the priority (cold sleepers, snow- and extreme use). True mummy bags have the advantage of a box (or tubular) foot compartment to keep the tootsies toasty warm. In mild conditions this feature can be a disadvantage (see the 'Buy right' box). Mummies with compatible left and right zips can be zipped together;

however, the 'cold' spot at the zips will be above and below the sleepers, rather than to the sides as with 'mated' tapered rectangular bags.

Weight

The weight tells us a lot about the intended use and quality of a down sleeping-bag. The fill weight of down was provided by the

manufacturers. 'Total weight' is the bag as it would be carried, including the stuff sack.

Down

A sleeping bag is simply a means of keeping a cocoon of down around the sleeper. Down is the optimum fill due to its incredible warmth-to-weight ratio and resilience. It keeps us cosy by trapping warm air against

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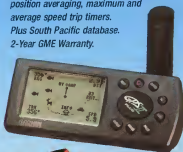
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 The Wilderness Shop, Box Hill (03) 9898 3742
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An expedition-capacity pack available in the full range of WE sizes and harness configurations.

our bodies. It's hard to ascertain exactly what's in a bag, so we have to accept the manufacturer's word. The best way to become acquainted with down specifications is to read the sleeping-bag catalogues. The ratio of fluffy down to stalky feathers was formerly used as a quality guide; however, it's been rather contentious. Ducks and geese produce top-quality down. As a benchmark, squeeze the most expensive—and cheapest—down bags in a shop. How soft or stalky is the down?

Loft rating

Of greater importance is the loft rating. A standard industry test reveals how many cubic inches one ounce of down will 'puff up' to. Quality down is resilient to being repeatedly crushed into a tiny stuff sack, and can loft back to maximum effectiveness at beddy-byes time.

Outer fabric

Various fabrics provide the shell and skeletal structure for the down. For Australian conditions sleeping-bag fabric should be relatively breathable, but not so porous as

to allow excessive leakage of down. Silk-like Pertex (originally designed for parachutes) is commonly used. Moisture is the biggest enemy of down and prevents it from lofting. Water-resistant outer fabrics such as DryLoft, HiLoft, Pertex Endurance and StormLight may cover either the whole bag or just the more vulnerable foot section.

Internal construction

The best way to understand the internal construction is to scrutinise manufacturers' catalogues. See the composite illustration, below, featuring some common construction elements.

Zip-slide

All surveyed bags have anti-snag zippers.

Draught tube, neck muff

Draught tubes prevent warm air leaving or cold air entering at the zip. Combined with a well-shaped hood that fits the sleeper, neck muffs complete the warmth jigsaw. The difference between two- and three-dimensional is explained by the diagram.

Sizes available

It is more useful to 'try a bag on' than to know its dimensions. I found that the cut of the 'standard' bags varied greatly around my 183 centimetre frame; I am on the borderline of requiring a standard/extra large size. Most bags are available in more than one size.



As snug as bugs. Doug Johnson

Comments


Some manufacturers produce more than one range of sleeping bags under their label. I've tried to select one bag from each range.

Surveyor's choice

Where does the sleeping-bag buyer begin when confronted with so many good bags? (All the surveyed models are good, some are very good and a few are excellent.) Unless you stumble upon a 'special' or wait for a sale, value for money isn't really an issue. You get what you pay for, and factors such as durability, warmth, weight and general quality increase with the price.

Using the criteria outlined in the notes and especially in the 'Buy right' box, I, hypothetically, went out to buy three bags: a budget tapered-rectangular, an expensive tapered-rectangular, and a mummy—and I've rated them all accordingly. Note that the bags span the seasonal criteria. Keep in mind that your surveyor is a 1.8 metre tall, warm-sleeping man and this is his subjective opinion of only a cross-section of the bags available.

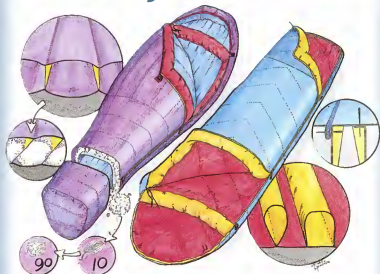
Approx price

Pricing is very competitive, and is a good indication of the quality and warmth of a bag. It should be noted that Australia produces down sleeping-bags well and truly on a par with the rest of the world. 

Michael Hampton (see Contributors in *Wild* no 171) lives in Marysville, Victoria, close by Australia's largest Nordic skiing area, Lake Mountain. A ski instructor, he is happiest exploring snow-laden alpine ash forests looking for photographic subjects, or gliding over the treeless high plains in search of remote cross-country downhill adventure.

This survey was refereed by Stephen Patnick.

Are you baffled?



This illustration shows many of the features with which you will be confronted.

On the left is a mummy-shaped bag that is differentially cut (the inner and outer layers of material differ in diameter). It has vertical baffles at the chest and horizontal baffles below. (Baffles prevent the down from moving around too much between the layers of material. Other baffle patterns include V-shaped, chevron [zigzag] and radial [ray-like].) Note the 'box' or 'tubular' shape of the foot section and the three vertical baffles at the end to help the down resist gravity. Plump draught tubes and a neck muff finish at a shaped hood. The larger insert to the left of the bag illustrates box-wall

construction. The one below shows how slant walls distribute down to eliminate cold spots. Differential cut is obvious where the foot section has been cut away. The fill is 90 per cent fluffy down and 10 per cent stalky feathers.

The tapered rectangular bag on the right has V-shaped baffles and a second fabric at the moisture-vulnerable foot, possibly DryLoft. A second zip, or twin slides, enables the foot section to be opened for ventilation. The larger insert to the right of the bag features a floppy 2D draught tube on the left, and a 3D one on the right. The insert above provides an example of tuck stitching (left) and top stitching (right). It's obvious why tuck stitching is stronger.

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In short, the MSR DragonFly is pretty cool. Or pretty warm or even hellishly hot, if you prefer.

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Day-and-a-half packs for bushwalking

John Hillard sizes up some overgrown day packs

DAY-AND-A-HALF RUCKSACKS ARE ABOUT 40–50 litres in volume: a bit larger than the 'day pack' and rather smaller than the 'overnight' pack. You might look to buy one for a variety of reasons. Many people would consider a day-and-a-half pack to be a good size for a day pack as it enables you to carry sufficient gear to be reasonably comfortable if you inadvertently have to stay out overnight when you had only planned to be out for a day. A day-and-a-half pack is a good size for lightweight weekend trips in warmer climates as well.

The packs surveyed are likely to be a little small for overnight or weekend bushwalking if you are carrying full gear including a tent and stove. Unless you use very lightweight gear or have others in the party carrying your share of the group equipment, you will probably have to tie some of your gear to the outside of the pack and this is not recommended.

Some of the better quality packs in this size range will be quite suitable for mountaineering, rockclimbing and other pursuits where the activity requires that you severely limit your load.

A huge range of day-and-a-half packs is available: a selection suitable for bushwalking were surveyed.

Volume and weight

The volumes and weights shown were provided by the manufacturer or importer. Manufacturers appear to use different methods of estimating the volume of their packs, so these figures should be regarded as indicative only. Some rucksacks of the same nominal volume seemed to differ significantly in the amount of useable space that they provide. If the volume or weight of the pack is critical to your decision, carefully compare those that you short-list.

Main material

Many packs are made with more than one material. Often a lighter fabric is used to

make the main part of the sack, and a more abrasion-resistant cloth features in areas of higher wear such as the base. The main material in the pack is described in generic terms for comparability. Some manufacturers use branded fabrics of various blends, coatings/laminations to achieve a better balance between weight, durability and

make it much easier to retrieve items from the bottom. But long zips mean more weight and stitching, and they increase the potential for water to find its way into the pack. If you expect to walk in very wet conditions, a simple top access with a drawcord throat is probably going to keep the water out the longest. If you're doing something

where you constantly need to move gear into and out of your rucksack, you might prefer something with a U-shaped zip or with top- and bottom-access.

Frame

Some of these packs have rigid frames of aluminium, fibreglass or other materials whereas others have a pad of closed-cell foam. For general bushwalking you will probably prefer a pack that has a rigid frame since it will be more comfortable for carrying heavier weights. Frameless packs used to be preferred for mountaineering or skiing, but this is no longer the case as clever frame design in many modern packs keeps the weight close to the back.

External pockets

We counted only those external pockets that are enclosed, water resistant and of a reasonable size. We did not include mesh- or wand pockets. (The latter are small, external slit-pockets intended for attaching tent poles and other gear.)

Suitability for other activities

The more durable and water-resistant models will be better suited to walkers whose trips entail wet conditions and frequent bush bashing. The table also identifies those packs that are likely to be better suited to the demands of (alpine) climbing and back-country skiing and snowboarding: these packs appear to have the right combination of durability, water resistance and adequate tie-on points for technical gear. The two packs specifically designed to carry snowboards are also



At last, the petrol-powered rucksack! (Kulu valley, India.)
Huw Kingston

waterproofing. In general, canvas is slightly more water resistant (and heavier), and textured nylon and polyester are a bit more durable.

Access

There is a clear trade-off between ease of access and water resistance and durability. Long zips around the outside of the pack

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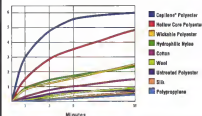
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identified. Rockclimbing/mountaineering and snowboard modules are available to fit the Mountain Designs packs at an extra cost.

The number of ice-tool loops and tie-on points is not necessarily a good indication of a pack's suitability for alpine-climbing use. Some of the better quality packs surveyed had relatively few (but adequate) tie-on points. Conversely, some of the

poorer quality packs were well endowed with tie-on points of dubious utility.

Harness comfort

This is a very important but highly subjective part of buying a pack. The ratings were given according to how well the waist-belt is cut and padded, how closely the pack fits the contours of the back and whether it has

a chest-strap. You should try on packs (loaded if possible) to assess whether each sits comfortably.

Durability

The durability rating reflects the weight of the materials, the quality of the seams and the type of reinforcing on areas of high wear and on stress points.

Day-and-a-half packs for bushwalking

		Volume, litres	Main material	Weight, grams	Access	Frame	External pockets	Suitability for other activities	Harness comfort	Durability	Water resistance	Value for money	Comments	Approx price, \$
Adventure Designs China														
	◀ Toe Jam	45	Nylon	1350	Top throat	Yes	1	Climbing/skiing	●● 1/2	●● 1/2	●●●	●●●		145
Berghaus China														
	Dart 40	40	Textured nylon	1100	Top	Yes	2		●● 1/2	●●●	●● 1/2	●●●		95
	◀ Bullfrog 30 + 20	50	Textured poly	1100	Top	Yes	3		●●●	●●●	●● 1/2	●●●		120
Black Diamond Korea														
	◀ Stone Pack	36	Textured nylon	990	Top throat	Yes	1	Climbing/skiing	●● 1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		160
	Ice Pack	44	As above	1600	As above	Yes	1	As above	●●●	●● 1/2	●●●	●● 1/2	Has bottle carriers	260
Cactus New Zealand														
	Mixdat †	40	Canvas	840	Top throat	No	1		●● 1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●		140
	Sedition †	40	Nylon	700	U-shaped zip	No	1	Snowboarding	●● 1/2	●●●●	●● 1/2	●●●	Has a snowboard carrier	170
Caribee China														
	◀ Cold Ice	45	Textured poly	1500	Top and bottom	Yes	1		●● 1/2	●● 1/2	●● 1/2	●●●	Has two compartments	100
Eagle Creek Mexico														
	Sirdar	39	Textured nylon	1100	U-shaped zip	Yes	2		●● 1/2	●● 1/2	●●	●●		250
	◀ Bhatah Sub	46	As above	1500	As above	Yes	1		●● 1/2	●● 1/2	●●	●●	Has a detachable day pack	320
Fairydown Asia														
	Little Beast †	50	Textured nylon	1700	Top	na	0		na	na	na	na		150
	◀ Tam †	45	Nylon/textured nylon	2100	Top	na	2		na	na	na	na		190
Kathmandu China														
	◀ Iguana	50	Textured nylon/poly laminate	1750	Top throat	Yes	1	Climbing/skiing	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		160
	Funnel Web	45	As above	1250	As above	Yes	1	As above	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Has a detachable bum-bag. Also available in a larger size	200

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Main material: Polyester Access: Top throat top access with a draw-cord throat na not assessed † not seen by author ‡ not seen by referee The country/region listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country/region in which the products are made

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- Sidetrack magazine 8/98



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Day-and-a-half packs for bushwalking continued

		Volume, litres	Main material	Weight, grams	Access	Frame	External pockets	Suitability for other activities	Harness option	Durability	Water resistance	Value for money	Comments	Approx price, \$
Macpac New Zealand														
	Rata	40	Canvas	900	Top throat	No	1		•••	••••	•••	•••	Has bottle carriers	200
	▶ Tuatara	40	Canvas	1000	As above	No	1	Climbing/skiing	•••	••••	•••	•• 1/2	Different back-lengths available	230
Modan China/Israel														
	Kinetic	45	Polyester	1850	Top	Yes	1	Climbing/skiing	•••	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	Has bottle carriers	240
	▶ Blue Sky Pro	50	Textured nylon	1750	U-shaped zip	Yes	1	As above	•••	•••	•• 1/2	••		300
Mountain Designs Australia														
	Arête	40	Canvas	1450	U-shaped zip	Yes	0	Climbing/snowboarding	••••	•••	•••	•• 1/2	Climbing/snowboarding add-ons are available at an extra cost	230
	▶ Ridge	40	Canvas	1630	Top throat	Yes	1	As above	••••	•••	••••	•• 1/2	As above. Laminated-fabric version also available	250
One Planet Australia														
	Vertex	50	Canvas/poly	1400	Top throat	Yes	1	Climbing/skiing	••••	••••	•••	•• 1/2		270
	▶ Tailgrab	50	As above	1000	U-shaped zip	Yes	0	Snowboarding	••••	••••	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	Has a snowboard carrier	280
Snowgum Vietnam														
	Pelican	40	Textured nylon	1100	Top zip	No	1	Climbing/skiing	•••	•••	•• 1/2	••••	Has a rope/helmet carrier	80
	▶ Condor	45	As above	1500	Top throat	Yes	1	As above	••••	•••	•••	••••		120
Summit Australia														
	Torre 40	45	Canvas	1280	Top throat	Yes	2		•••	•••	•••	•• 1/2		230
	Wallaby 1	50	Canvas	1500	Top	na	2		na	na	na	na		240
Tatonka Vietnam														
	Arco	48	Textured poly	1350	Top	No	1		•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2		140
	Bike & Hike	40	As above	1600	Top and bottom	Yes	3		•••	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	With bottom access	160
Vango China														
	Odyssey 1	45	Textured nylon	850	Top	No	3		•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•••		75
	▶ Canyon 1	40	As above	1400	Top throat	Yes	2	Climbing/skiing	•••	•• 1/2	•••	•••	Has a pack cover	130
White Mountain Vietnam														
	Cliffr	45	Polyester	1050	U-shaped zip	No	1		•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2	•• 1/2		140
	▶ Lyrebird 1	40	Polyester	1050	Top	na	2		na	na	na	na		145
Wilderness Equipment Australia														
	Contour	36	Canvas	680	Top	No	1		•• 1/2	•••	•• 1/2	•••		150
	▶ Tourjour	40	Canvas	1100	Top	Yes	1		•• 1/2	•••	•• 1/2	••		230

• poor •• average ••• good •••• excellent Main material: Polyester Access: Top throat top access with a draw cord throat na not assessed † not seen by author ‡ not seen by referee The country/region listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country/region in which the products are made

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- 3 Each entry must be marked 'Wild-Nikon Photo Competition' and sent to Wild Publications Pty Ltd, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.
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- 5 The entrant's name and full address must appear on each entry.
- 6 Entries must be the work of the contestant and not previously published.
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Water resistance

Packs that rate better on water resistance are made from good-quality materials and have a well-fitting top flap with a draw-cord throat, relatively few seams for water to penetrate and well-designed flaps over any zips. However well a pack rates in this column, you're still likely to need a pack liner or cover if the rain is heavy and persistent.

Buy right

Less is more!

A simple design with few seams will generally last longer and be more water resistant. Do you really need ice-tool attachment points if you're only going to use the pack on walks at low altitude?

Comfort

Does the pack fit the length and contour of your back? Does it have a frame?

Stability

Does the pack stay close to your back as you move, particularly if you want to use it for alpine climbing or skiing? Does it have a chest-strap?

Waterproofing

Is there a draw-cord throat? Does the hood fit neatly around the opening? Will water run-off seep under flaps and through zips?

Stitching

Are the seams well made and stitched?

Access

How easy will it be to access gear during the day?

Value for money

This rating is my assessment of how well the rucksack will perform on typical bushwalks relative to the recommended retail price. Note that the packs were not field tested. Those who are buying a rucksack specifically for climbing or back-country skiing/snowboarding may ascribe a greater value-for-money rating to the higher quality packs that better meet their specific requirements.

Approx price

The prices quoted are the recommended retail prices supplied by the distributors, and apply to packs with standard features.

John Hillard has been a bushwalker, cross-country skier and occasional alpine climber for longer than he cares to remember. His favourite places tend to be high mountains, lots of snow and very few people.

This survey was refereed by John Chapman.

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			Halogen	Krypton	Wide	Narrow	Halogen	Krypton		Mesh	Fleece
Solo	2 watts	2AA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5hrs	8hrs	127g	—	Yes
Vortec	4 watts	4AA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5hrs	8hrs	227g	Yes	—

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Glad rags

The 1999 Snow & Outdoor Trade Show (SOTA)—where manufacturers and importers show off their latest wares to retailers—will be remembered for the innovative, special-ist outdoors fabrics unveiled.

In response to a demand for lighter, water-proof clothing, **WL Gore & Associates** has come up with a lightweight and less bulky version of its famous Gore-Tex—Pac-

Lite. The new fabric is said to be as water-proof as all Gore-Tex, yet more breathable than all two- and three-layer Gore-Tex garments. The inside of PacLite has a distinctive dot pattern to protect the fabric's membrane. This means that clothing made from PacLite doesn't need to be lined.

Specialist jackets made from PacLite are available at present from **Mountain Designs** shops and **One Planet** stockists.



Above, a silky soft and superwarm Regulator top by Patagonia. Above right, the new, lighter Gore-Tex PacLite fabric—available in a jacket near you!

trix

Flat out
Bringing your self-
inflating sleeping-mat
back to life,
by Chris Baxter

Tiny, almost invisible punctures in self-inflating sleeping-mats are the bane of an outdoors person's existence, at least for those who appreciate a good night's sleep. While they ensure that your mat will deflate all too quickly with your weight on it locating them can prove as difficult as finding the right route in a white-out. Simply immersing the mat in water and looking for air bubbles is all too often inconclusive. Even if you find the punctures you're then faced with the problem of trying to fix them.

If you choose to do it yourself you'll need a repair kit (supplied with some makes and models of self-inflating mats or available separately from outdoors shops). The most effective way to find punctures is to inflate the mat as much as possible. Next, paint it all over with a solution of liquid household detergent and water. Finally, submerge the mat in a bath, apply pressure and look for a stream of air bubbles (made more visible by the detergent solution). If you still can't see the source of the problem, fold the submerged mat in half, then apply pressure.

If you're fortunate enough to own a Therm-A-Rest there's an alternative. The Australian distributor (Grant Minervini Agencies Pty Ltd, PO Box 209, Wolland, SA 5007) will repair Therm-A-Rest punctures for the nominal charge of \$15, including handling and return postage within Australia. That strikes me as a pretty good deal.

If your mat is (now) intact it is worth protecting it from anything that might puncture it in the future. Similarly, avoid doing anything that might cause the outer fabric to delaminate from the foam—such as placing a hot item (a mug of tea) on the mat or spilling fuel or insect repellent on it.

Sweet dreams.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

lightweight **gas stove** designed for hard-core gear freaks with healthy bank balances. The Alpine Titanium weighs 85 grams (without the fuel canister or the detachable piezo igniter). The latter is for those rather embarrassing occasions when you've forgotten your matches. Estimated retail price is \$300.

On 1 January 2000 **Mountain Safety**

Research will launch its new **gas stove**, the **SuperFly**, which is said to have the best boil-time-to-weight ratio of any butane stove (except perhaps the Alpine Titanium). It weighs 129 grams (without the fuel canister) and can apparently boil a pot of cold water within three minutes. The SuperFly won't burn your custard either—precise flame control lets you go from a gentle simmer to full boil. The system fits almost all self-sealing butane canisters which means that you can use it all over the world. The SuperFly is also available with an igniter. For more information and a free catalogue, phone 1800 882 058. RRP \$99.95 (standard), \$139 (with igniter).

Snuggly pom

Snuggpak reports that it is supplying the British armed forces direct in East Timor with olive-green **Softie 3 Merlin sleeping-bags**, **bivvy-bags** and **Snuggly pillows**. The custom-made sleeping-bags have a reinforced foot section (so that soldiers can wear their boots to bed?) and an expanded side panel (to accommodate a gun). The standard **Softie 3 Merlin** (see Equipment, Wild no 74), the bivvy-bags and the pillows are available to the public. For the nearest stockist, phone (03) 9489 9766. RRP \$295, \$275 and \$26, respectively.

The water gatekeeper

Question: I'm about the same size and weight as a cork but when you slip me into a bottle I don't stop the liquid; I filter it. What am I? The **Sea to Summit Gatekeeper** is a new, compact **water filtration system** that offers protection from giardia lamblia, Cryptosporidium parvum, and other water-borne pollutants—without the use, or nasty taste, of iodine. The Gatekeeper has a push-pull cap which fits PET bottles. It is claimed that the system will filter about 100 litres of water. It is available from most outdoors shops. RRP \$19.95. ●

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

Patagonia's range of **Regulator** clothing utilises a new generation of **polyester fleece** which, it is claimed, is lighter, more compact and warmer for its weight compared to either Polartec or Patagonia's own **Synchilla**. The samples we saw appear to bear that out. Developed in partnership with Malden Mills, manufacturer of Polartec, **Regulator** is available in three weights and is designed to meet the needs of hard-core outdoors enthusiasts.

Sherpa Outdoor Equipment received attention for its range of outdoors fleece clothing made from **illumiNITE** reflective fabric which is designed for walkers, joggers and cyclists using roads at night and who would otherwise wear clothing with conventional reflective strips. It was enough to bring a sparkle to any shopkeeper's eye!

Weight loss in the new millennium

Primus has announced the imminent arrival of the **Alpine Titanium** (available in Australia in March), a seriously

For the really heavy-duty gear freak: the ultralight Primus Alpine Titanium stove.



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Environmental impact!

The results of the recent Victorian election indicate that politicians should not ignore environmental issues. The State's three Independent MPs—two of whom had included environmental issues in their election platforms—effectively had the power to decide which party would form government. Newly elected Independent Craig Ingram is 'passionate about restoring a significant flow to the Snowy River, [which] trickles through his electorate', according to the *Australian* on 19 October. (See following item.) The October issue of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) newsletter reports that re-elected Independent Susan Davies had won the 1997 Gippsland West by-election on a strong environmental platform, which principally included Wilsons Promontory and Seal Rocks. In addition, Greens preferences helped to return two ALP candidates in at least two marginal seats, and the ALP platform addressed a number of important environmental issues.

The Snowy; a wave of hope

The Snowy River Alliance, a coalition of recreational and environmental groups in Victoria and NSW, is hopeful that the defeat of former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett will pave the way for the restoration of the Snowy River.

Following the Victorian election, the balance of power is held by three Independents including Craig Ingram. A former National Party supporter, Ingram stood for the Gippsland East seat after pleas for more water to be allocated to the Snowy were rejected.

At present negotiations are under way between the Commonwealth, Victorian and New South Wales Governments over the levels of water flow for the Snowy River prior to the managing authority being corporatised.

As a result of the Snowy River hydro-electric scheme, the once-mighty Snowy was reduced to only one per cent of its natural flow. An environmental report recommended that at least 28 per cent of the Snowy's original flow would be required to restore the river. The NSW Government, under pressure from irrigation users, has refused to restore levels to more than 15 per cent.

The campaign of the Snowy River Alliance has been partly funded through a \$3000 grant from the Conservation Alliance, of which Wild is a foundation member.

Bob Burton

Tragedy of errors



The Hinchinbrook Action Group demonstrating in September at Oyster Point, northern Queensland, against the proposed 'Port Hinchinbrook' development. A recent Senate inquiry into the development process at Oyster Point has revealed 'a tragedy of errors'. Steven Nowakowski

A Senate inquiry has found that the management of development proposals at Oyster Point on the Hinchinbrook Channel, northern Queensland, has been a tragedy of errors. 'The Hinchinbrook Channel Inquiry', released on 27 September, reflects what conservationists have said since the project's inception. To quote the report:

'For more than a decade the proposal to develop a marina and resort at Oyster Point on the Hinchinbrook Channel, part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, has been characterised by controversy, inter-governmental disputes and bungling at all levels.

'...the management of development proposals at Oyster Point has been a tragedy of errors, the results of which have been unsatisfactory to all concerned.

'...a tremendous amount of expense and aggravation would have been avoided if the resort and marina project first proposed in 1987 had been subjected to a proper environmental assessment process.'

The Hinchinbrook Action Group has resumed vigorous direct action against Keith Williams's proposed 'Port Hinchinbrook' development.

Steven Nowakowski

Secrets and lies

A book co-authored by Australian conservationist Bob Burton, and which was written using leaked papers, has led to calls in Parliament for the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley, to resign.

Secrets and Lies, by Nick Hager and Bob Burton, provides inside details of an anti-environmentalist campaign conducted by British-based PR company Shandwick on behalf of the State-owned logging enterprise, Timberlands, with the support of Shipley.

The strategy was to stigmatise logging opponents as 'extremists', who had 'limited' support and who spread 'misinformation'.

Tactics included infiltrating green groups and spying on them. Timberlands used legal threats—none of which actually went to court—to silence those who raised concerns about logging.

Cash was offered to 'experts' to give favourable opinions, and Shandwick set up a fake 'grass roots' pro-logging organisation. Shipley was the relevant minister at the

time and documents show that her office fed information to Shandwick regularly—which she had denied in Parliament.

As Burton said: 'The chilling thing about these papers is that, with a bucketful of cash, a PR firm can undermine democracy.'

Brian Walters

Historic forest agreement

The signing of the South East Queensland Forest Agreement on 16 September marks an historic peace agreement over forests.

The agreement, signed by the Queensland Government, the timber industry and environmental groups, puts another 425 000 hectares of native forests into reserves, and allows the timber industry to continue operating at present levels for 25 years. Supply to 97 per cent of hardwood mills that receive their timber from Crown land will not be reduced during this period, and there will be a guarantee from the government of no job losses.

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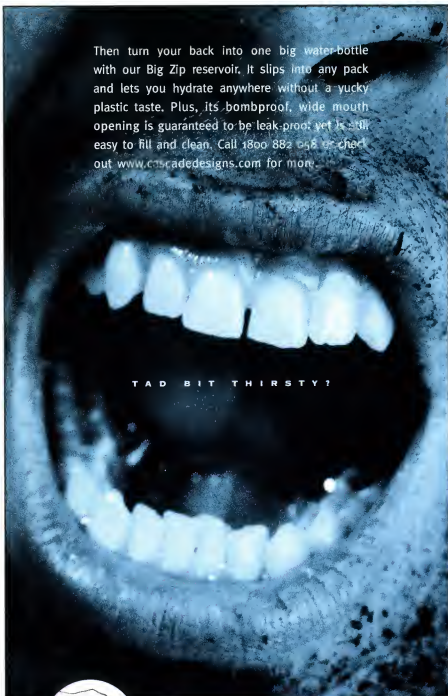
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The agreement has only been made possible through the leadership of Premier Peter Beattie, and the cooperation of conservationists and the timber industry.

Friends of the Earth believes that this agreement is a milestone in the preservation of Queensland forests and offers a viable model for other areas of Australia. The Regional Forest Agreements signed elsewhere to date have not been able to end the conflict which has been a hallmark of forest management issues for more than two decades.

The Wongungarra saved!

In *Wild* no 42 Jamie Pittock remarked in his article 'Victoria's Wild Alpine River' that 'the Wongungarra River...is a survivor'. Deep within a rugged, forested labyrinth of spurs in the Victorian Alps, the valley has now been spared from logging, with 2700 hectares of it to be added to the Alpine National Park. This remarkable decision was announced in August as part of north-east Victoria's Regional Forest Agreement.

Stephen Curtain

Government failure

The Kennett Government failed to protect endangered species and their dwindling habitats as required by legislation, according to documents released by the then Opposition, Melbourne's *Age* reported on 13 August. Many threatened plants and creatures were left exposed to development because of delays in ministerial approvals and action plans, the documents show. The backlog also left gaps in conservation assessments in the Regional Forest Agreements.

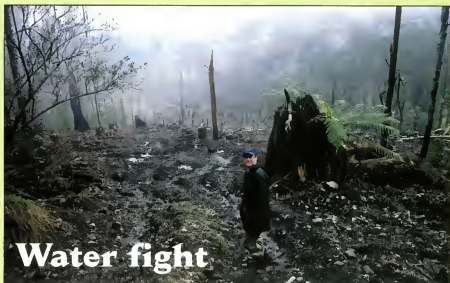
The documents show that recommendations to protect rare myrtle beech rainforests are trapped in the backlog, as is the listing of habitat fragmentation as a threatening process. The scientific advisory committee to the then Conservation Minister, Marie Tehan, says that the survival of recognised threatened species such as the squirrel glider, red-tailed cockatoo, mountain pygmy possum and the striped legless lizard is at risk.

The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* requires the Conservation Minister to act on recommendations for listings within 30 days, but the Opposition documents show delays from several months to more than three years.

WOOD-CHIPS

* An **Extraordinary General Meeting** of shareholders of **North Ltd**, the parent company of ERA Ltd (the company building the mine at **Jabiluka**), was held on 29 October to examine issues relating to Jabiluka. North Ltd was also required to distribute to each of its 57 000 shareholders a document—compiled with the help of The Wilderness Society—outlining the environmental, social and economic impacts of the Jabiluka mine.

* Just before the recent Victorian election a controversial **powerline** through the



Water fight

The Wilderness Society campaigner Gavan McFadzean in the Armstrong Creek catchment, Victoria. Melbourne's water catchments are increasingly being opened up for clear-fell logging. Stephen Curtain

The Wilderness Society (TWS) is planning to reinvigorate the campaign to protect the Central Highlands forest on Melbourne's doorstep. Along with Environment Victoria (EV), TWS is looking to campaign for Melbourne's water catchments, which are increasingly being opened up for clear-fell logging—an extraordinary trend given the recent water contamination crisis in Sydney and the prospect of Melbourne facing restrictions this summer. The northern Central Highlands also contain magnificent forests of 1929 and 1939 mixed species, alpine ash and mountain ash which are being intensively logged.

EV states that the mountain-ash forests of the Central Highlands are woodchipped largely by Kimberly-Clark and

its parent company, Amcor, for their paper products including Kleenex tissues and Reflex copier paper. EV is targeting the manufacturer of Kleenex tissues with a write-in and no-buy protest.

▲ Act now

To record your protest against these activities, write briefly to this effect and mail it to Environment Victoria, 19 O'Connell St, North Melbourne, Vic 3051, asking for EV to deliver your protest with many others to Kimberly-Clark. EV also suggests readers consider purchasing alternative products. TWS is making regular trips to the Central Highlands forests; phone (03) 9639 5455 for details.

Alpine National Park was approved, the VNPA newsletter reported in October. The underground power cable, to provide a back-up source of electricity to Mt Hotham, will pass along the walking track that traverses Mt Loch, and along part of the Australian Alps Walking Track. The permit given does not require that the disturbance be kept to a width of 1.8 metres by the use of small machinery or hand-excavation, as requested by the Department of Natural Resources & Environment. Instead it is proposed to use three metre wide heavy machinery which will have a major impact at an altitude where rehabilitation is virtually impossible.

* A report released by the Victorian and Federal Governments officially confirms that the **native hardwood industry** in the western region of Victoria is overwhelmingly woodchip driven, said an environmental group in August. 'The Comprehensive Regional Assessment' report shows that at least 75 per cent of

all timber taken from native forests in the Western Region, which includes the Otways, ends up as chips or waste', said Chris Tipler of the Otway Ranges Environment Network.

* Most **Australian conservation groups** have reported dramatic **increases in membership**, according to the *Age* on 29 September. The Australian Conservation Foundation has reached record membership levels, while other groups are reporting a surge in support from people who do not join but regularly donate money.

* Reeling from the rapid growth in environmental, labour, indigenous and human rights groups forming global alliances, the **mining industry** is investigating options for creating its own **umbrella industry group**, the *Mining Monitor* reported in June. ☐

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3801.

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The Bush by Boot and Ski

by Malcolm Bennett (published by the author, 1999, RRP \$24.95 plus \$5 p&p from PO Box 9039, Deakin, ACT 2600).

For the past 30 years Malcolm Bennett's 'grand passion' has been ski-touring and bushwalking and, in particular, Kiandra to Kosciuszko crossings and extended trips in the Budawangs in NSW.

These genial memoirs detail an open-air life deeply familiar to *Wild* readers—days spent finding one's way, shouldering rucksacks, facing the elements and sussing out camp-sites.

As Bennett's trip accounts suggest, such activities bring rewards other than just stirring mountain views. Most significant are the growing affinities with specific places and fellow travellers.

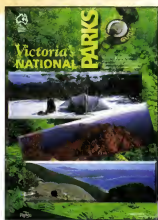
Although some readers might find this book's tempo a little sluggish—the opening 'rationale', for example, spans 53 pages—there is humour and whimsy to jolly things along.

In the end it's clear that the author's regard for the High Country is not any armchair infatuation but arises from a large number of hard-won journeys shared with good friends. And it's these links between endeavour and companionship that give this book its strongest appeal.

Quentin Chester

Victoria's National Parks

(See Australia Guides, 1999, RRP \$36.95—*Wild* readers can receive a \$5.00 discount by phoning 1031 5962 57231).



With descriptions of more than 120 Victorian parks (most not National Parks, despite its title), this full-colour, large-format, soft-cover guide is a comprehensive and convenient reference. The parks covered

range from the biggest and best, such as Wilsons Promontory, to several within greater Melbourne. The maps are clear and useful, and there are details of available facilities. If you wish to take greater advantage of Victoria's parks, *Victoria's National Parks* will help you to do so.

Chris Baxter

Places in the Heart: Australians writing about their favourite heritage places

(Australian Heritage Commission, 1998, RRP \$14.95 from Envirobook, 38 Rose St, Annandale, NSW 2038).

In 1997 the Australian Heritage Commission organised a competition inviting people to write about their favourite places. This well-produced book is a compilation drawn from the 2725 submissions.

On one level *Places in the Heart* can be seen as a feel-good exercise; not surprisingly, hard-sold destinations such as Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef emerge as our chart toppers. At the same time, the starvation ration of 100 words an entry gave contestants little opportunity to warm to their respective themes.

Yet, for all the platitudes, this collection does present a snapshot of how Australians view their continent. And while favoured places include country towns, civic buildings and even cemeteries, it's heartening to note that the overwhelming number of entries reflect strong feelings for the natural world.

QC

Walking in Ireland

by Sandra Bardwell, Pat Levy & Gareth McCormack (Lonely Planet Publications, 1999, RRP \$24.95).

It's not every day that you receive a review copy of a book of track notes for an overseas country and immediately have the opportunity to put it to the test 'on the ground'. However, the

arrival of *Walking in Ireland* on my desk in late August presented just such an opportunity as my wife, Sue, and I were planning a walking holiday in Ireland the following month. We wanted to do an outstanding walk of at least a week's duration. Of the few meeting that criteria, the Beara Way sounded the best—being described as wild, spectacular and untouristed—so we chose it.

Frankly, we were disappointed. The Beara Way is not exactly a wilderness experience. We concluded that Australian walkers are spoilt, and that, in spite of the lavish raves ascribed to the walks covered in *Walking in Ireland*, the Irish walking experience is different from what you'd expect. (Most walks are very short, undemanding and close to civilisation.) Having said that, the Beara Way has its charms and we found this guidebook helpful in both planning and undertaking it. (Note, however, that some parts have already been rerouted since this description was written.)

As with all recent Lonely Planet walking guides, *Walking in Ireland* is excellently produced, very well researched and a mine of information.

If short, 'civilised' walks are your pot of Guinness, Ireland is a gold-mine and this book is your metal detector.

CB

Lerderderg & Werribee Gorges map

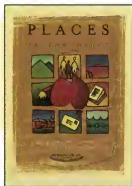
(Meridian Productions, 1999, RRP \$8.00).

This pair of State Parks near the town of Bacchus Marsh, west of Melbourne, has long been popular with day walkers. Werribee Gorge is also an important rockclimbing area of half a dozen or so separate cliffs. This convenient, double-sided, full colour map will prove useful in planning and undertaking visits to an area notorious for its complex network of vehicular tracks. There are, in fact,

three maps, with scales ranging from 1:15 000 to 1:35 000. All have contours. Exercise caution when using the maps as major features aren't shown including cliffs on the north side of the Lerderderg River downstream from O'Briens Crossing. ●

CB

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Rock back issues. Only these back issues remain: nos 1 (guidebook-sized reproduction with plastic cover), 21 (climbing instruction survey), 22 (Mt Bourne area guidebook), 23 (Yu Yangs guidebook), 24 (Wentworth Guidebook), 25 (New Zealand Alpine guiding survey),

26, 27 (Thailand guidebook), 28, 29, 30 (Nowra update and New Climbs guidebook), 31, 32, 33 (The Rock and New Climbs guidebook), 34 (including guidebook-sized reproduction of Fleet no 1), 35, 36, 37 (Wonderland Range guidebook), 38 (Mt Geyron & the Acropolis and New Climbs guidebook), 39 and 40. See text for order form bound in this issue.

Wild. Single copies of the following previously sold-out issues have been unearthed and are available on a strictly first come, first served basis only. New Publications Nos 6, 8, 14, 15, 16 \$10 each. Nos 40, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61 \$750 each. Some issues may be slightly damaged. Phone (03) 9826 8483.

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A man in a blue long-sleeved shirt, black shorts, and a blue life vest is ziplining over a wide, calm river. He is holding onto a thick black rope with both hands and has one leg extended outwards. The background features a dense forest of evergreen trees and mountains in the distance under a clear sky.

Dave Barr hauls himself across the Squamish River, British Columbia, Canada. After the 45-minute crossing he and his companions were received by a berry-feasting bear on the opposite bank: 'Welcome to the wilderness, boys.' Greg Tossel

Wild welcomes slides for this page; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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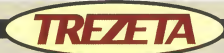
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